Future

THE LØST ISSUE 2017

★CLASSIC★ ROCK

THE GRATEFUL DEAD

The Long Strange Trip Of America's Biggest Cult Band

40

Pages of

Lost Icons, Forgotten Heroes & Unearthed Classics!

Starring:

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1976-2017

STEVEN WILSON

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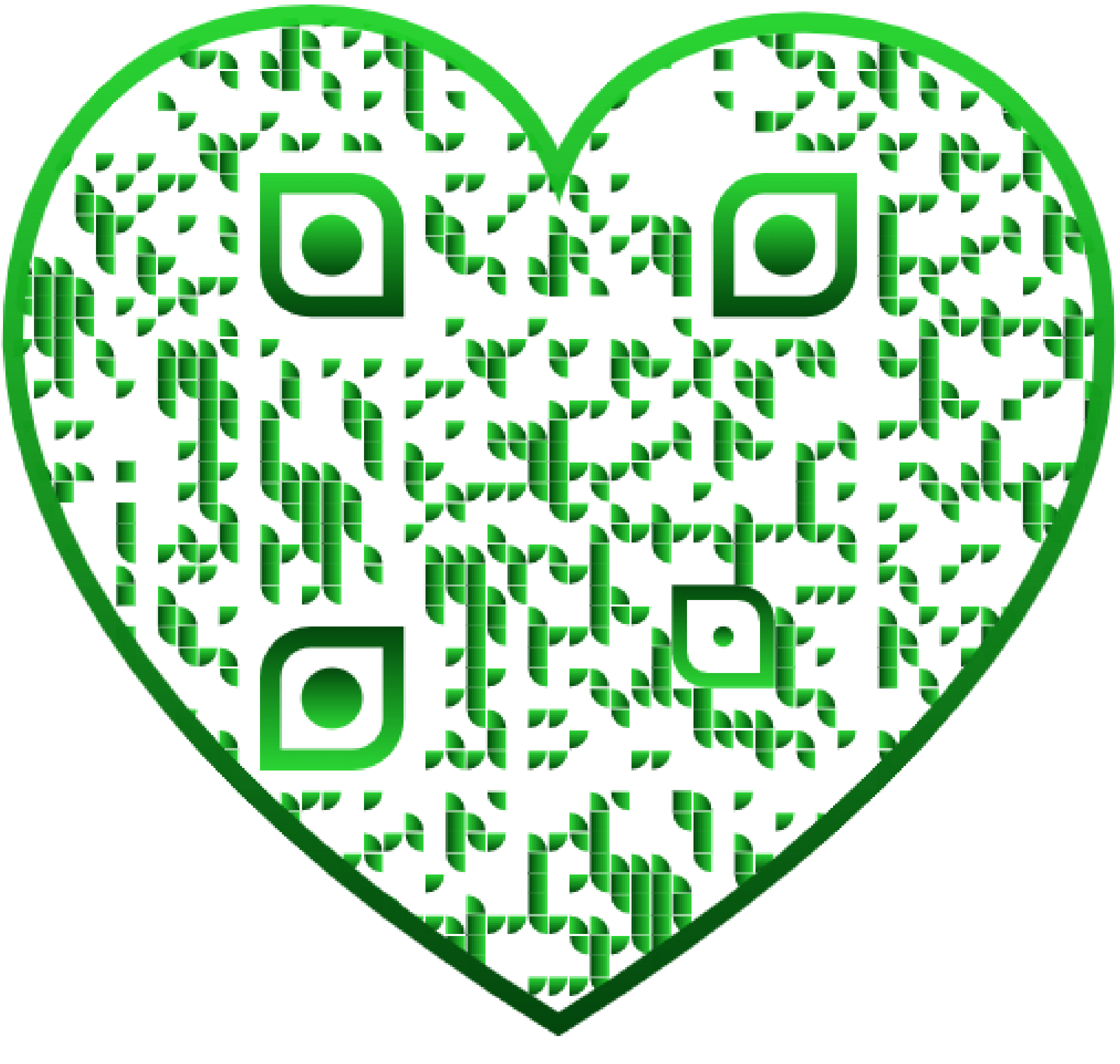

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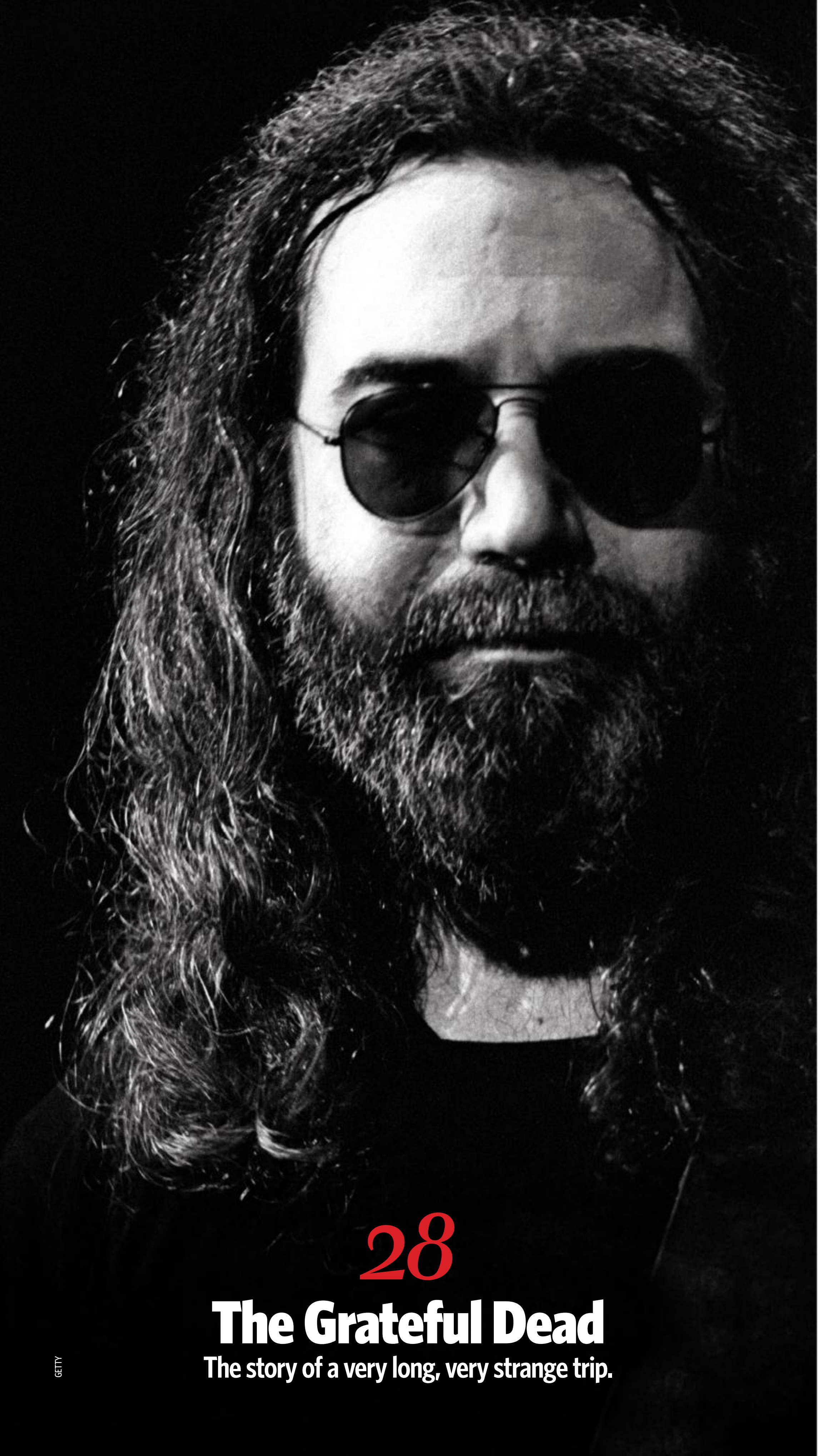

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The Grateful Dead
The story of a very long, very strange trip.

GETTY

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A Deeper Understanding
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Cats In Space
Scarecrow
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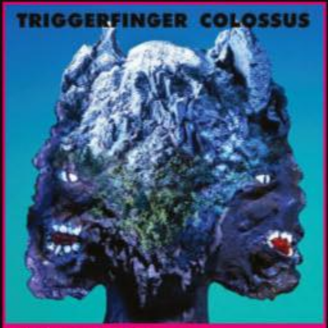

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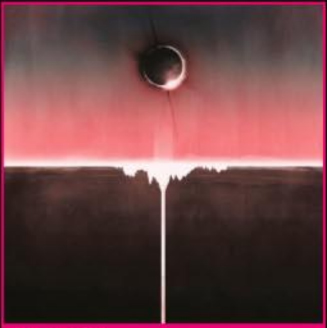

Mogwai
Every Country's Sun
out 1 September on CD & vinyl
Scotland's finest post-rock band return with their new Dave Fridmann-produced album. Includes the track Coolverine.

Steve Winwood
Greatest Hits Live
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Sourced from his personal archives of live performances, the 23-song tracklist was handpicked by Steve and features his best-loved songs.

T.Rex
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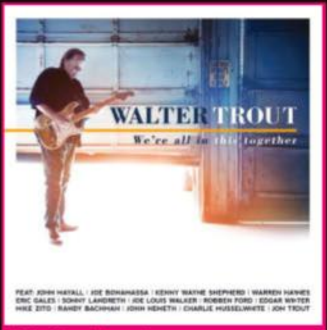

Walter Trout
We're All In This Together
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Features contributions from a number of familiar faces, including John Mayall, Joe Bonamassa, Kenny Wayne Shepherd and Sonny Landreth.

Sløtface
Try Not To Freak Out
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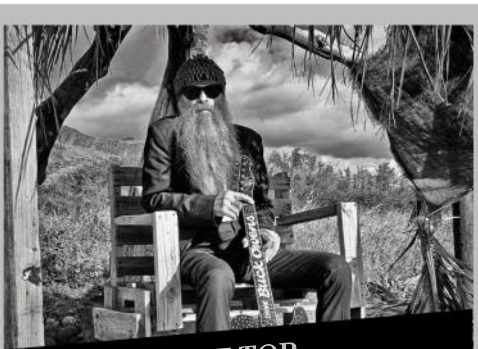

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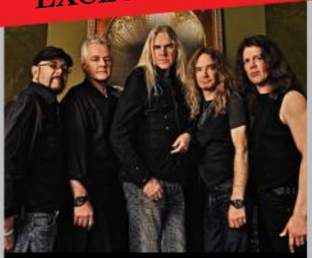

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SCORPIONS
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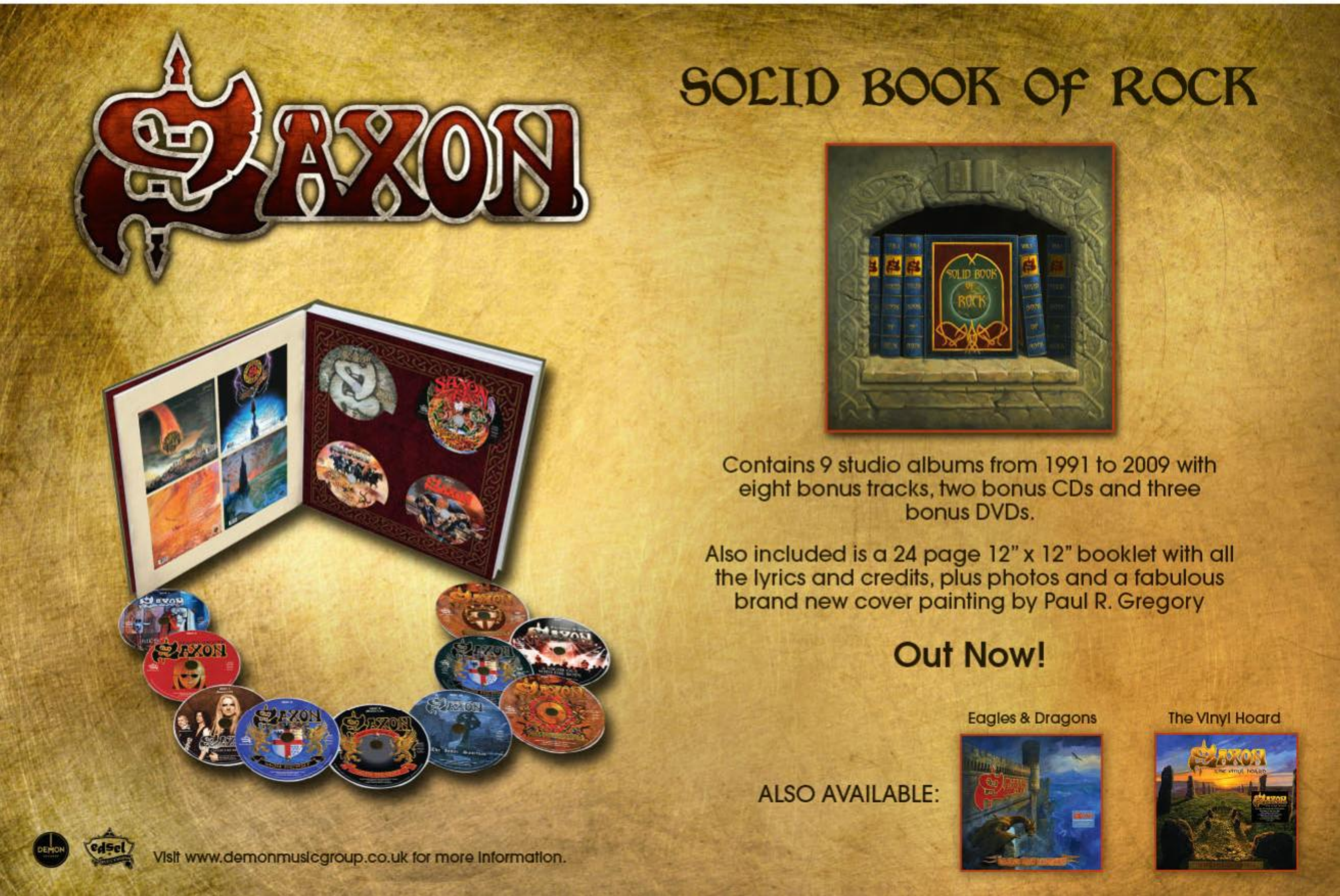
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Time for a confession. I think every rock fan has a band or two that they know they ought to know more about, or ought to listen to, or ought to explore further, but somehow have just never quite managed to get around to it. For me, I'm afraid it's the Grateful Dead.

I know the name, obviously. I could list many of their line-up. I know their logo. I know the names and sleeves of several of their albums. But their music and their myth? Well, I'm afraid I didn't know all that much. Until this month's issue, that is, when we decided to put that right once and for all. And in the UK, at least, I'd wager that I'm not alone. Although they're one of the biggest bands rock has ever known, the Grateful Dead are something of an unknown quantity over here. A somewhat 'lost' band, if you will.

So it made perfect sense for us to take a deep dive into the more than half-century of the Dead to head up our 'Lost' issue – a chance for us to take a look at other criminally neglected or overlooked scenes, people and music in the rock firmament. We run the gamut from jam bands to alt.rock to original line-up reunions to be lost in the vaults. Until now.

THE COVER: LONG STRANGE TRIP: THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE GRATEFUL DEAD ARTWORK COURTESY OF AMAZON PRIME VIDEO

Siân Llewellyn,
Editor

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This month's contributors

ROB HUGHES

Rob Hughes's first encounter with Alice Cooper was as a seriously spooked six-year-old, watching him do *School's Out* on *Top Of The Pops*. This month he finally got to meet Alice to discuss reconnecting with his original band, and learned he's not half as scary as he looks. Rob also found time to delve into the American jam band revival, the world's biggest cult scene.

MARK ELLEN

Mark has spent for four eventful, character-forming decades in the music magazine trenches and has particularly fond memories of working at the *NME, Smash Hits, Q, Select, Mojo* and *The Word*. He saw the Ramones at the Rainbow Theatre in 1977, and meets up with their former manager Danny Fields, the *real* 'godfather of punk', on page 56.

KRIS NEEDS

This month sees former *ZigZag* editor Kris remembering forgotten blues hero Cyril Davies (page 60). Kris's recent activities include writing *The Thin White Book* to honour the world's first statue of the late David Bowie, which will be going up in Aylesbury's fabled Market Square next year once sufficient funds are raised.

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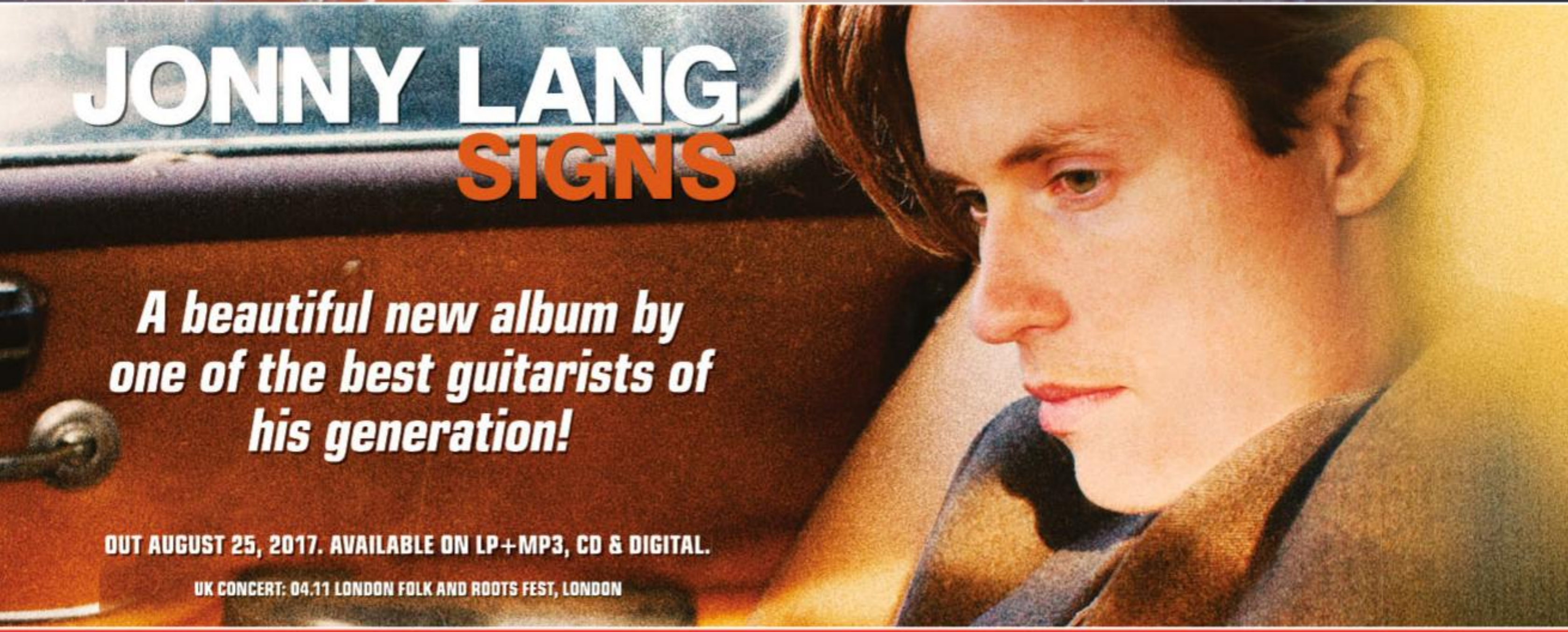

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Chester Bennington

March 20, 1976 – July 20, 2017

Classic Rock's Dave Ling remembers the Linkin Park frontman.

Chester Bennington was a dreamer. A recurring childhood fantasy of his was Depeche Mode flying their private jet into his schoolyard, scooping him up and proposing an abandonment of studies and a humdrum young life to become the fifth member of their group.

"I was always so excited [by that]," Bennington told me in a *Metal Hammer* interview in late 2000 just as his own career with Linkin Park began to gain traction. "We would perform a concert in front of my schoolmates and then fly off for a world tour together."

Bennington's make-believe tale never came true, but another product of his wild imagination, the one in which he joined Stone Temple Pilots, did.

The amazing reception to Linkin Park's debut album, 2000's *Hybrid Theory*, which sold 17 million copies, ensured that his adulthood was feathered by success on a scale that few rock musicians ever experience.

Bennington often spoke of the "dark thoughts" instilled in him by a difficult youth, but nobody expected the married 41-year-old father-of-six to commit suicide by hanging himself – on what would have been the 53rd birthday of Chris Cornell, one of his idols and friends, and in very similar circumstances to how the Soundgarden/Audoslave singer's life ended.

To Chester's great joy he had become a friend of Cornell, and was godfather to his son Christopher. When Cornell died, Chester paid tribute with the Leonard Cohen's song *Hallelujah* at his private internment. *'I did my best, it wasn't much/I couldn't feel, so I tried to touch,'* he sang that day in a choked-up voice. *'I've told the truth, I didn't come to fool you/And even though it all went wrong, I'll stand before the Lord of Song/ With nothing on my tongue but Hallelujah.'*

It's impossible to know what went through the mind of Chester Bennington on the morning of July 20 – just eight weeks after that tribute. Shortly after Cornell's suicide, Bennington posted on the net of having dreamed of The Beatles the night before, and then watching a video of Cornell singing that band's classic *A Day In The Life*. "I'd like to think you were saying goodbye," he wrote.

Sadly, nobody got a chance to say goodbye to Chester Bennington.

'Bennington was a bruised and wrathful young man, but like so many others before him, music would become his salvation.'

Chester Bennington grew up in Phoenix, Arizona. At the age of 11 his parents' divorce sent him into an anger-fuelled tailspin. He later confided that he had endured sexual abuse from an older male friend for four years. This would continue until he was 13. After his father gained custody he was physically bullied at high school and began using dope, LSD, cocaine, opium, booze and crystal meth. At 17, having moved back in with his mother, Chester's drug taking caused her to eject him from the house. He later referred to his adolescence as "awful", "lonely" and "scary".

Between the ages of 10 and 14 he soaked up the Sugarhill Gang's hip-hop and the music of rapper Slick Rick before diving into the punk scene. "Punk led me to rock'n'roll, then R&B, and I have started to appreciate classic rock like Led Zeppelin, The Who and Black Sabbath because I wanted to know where it all came from," he explained.

By the early 1990s, when he began singing with a series of early bands, including post-grungers Grey Daze, Bennington was a bruised and wrathful young man. But, like so many others before him, music would become his salvation.

And yet, after struggling to make an impression, he almost gave it up. The phone call that changed his life came from an A&R man in Los Angeles who suggested Bennington should hook up with a band called Xero, who later evolved into Linkin Park. This was very much a last throw of the dice for him. After passing an audition, he moved his family to the West Coast.

There was an instant chemistry between Bennington, with his mainly rock-influenced vocal style, and co-frontman Mike Shinoda, who was very much a rapper. Together the band fused crunchy metal riffs with hip-hop beats, overlaid with electronic elements and samples from DJ Joe Hahn.

Just like so many other groundbreakers, Linkin Park were turned down by every record company in America, before an executive from Warner Brothers agreed to attend a behind-closed-doors showcase. By this point Bennington had co-fronted the group for nine months, and his patience and confidence were beginning to ebb away. Warners were sufficiently inquisitive to take a chance, despite the fact that they couldn't hear a hit.

It was only after signing the contract that the band wrote the song that lit the blue touch paper: *One Step Closer*. Its parent album, *Hybrid Theory*, just 37 minutes long, tapped into the ADD-fuelled zeitgeist of the new internet era. Soon it was selling 50,000 copies a week.

"We like to call our music 'mixed media' because there's more to it than just rap-rock," Bennington told me back in 2000. "We're trying to be the bridge between several different genres. Nobody out there sounds like us, and we sincerely believe that we are doing something unique."

Despite the tip of the hat to Led Zeppelin *et al*, Linkin Park held the bloated old-school-influenced hard rockers of the 90s in disdain. "Nobody wants a song like *November Rain* by Guns N' Roses any more – anything [that lasts for more than] five minutes is a freak," Bennington boasted. For Linkin Park, this meant that *Hybrid Theory* was guitar solo-free. "We wanted ▷

PAUL HARRIES/ICONICPIX

This month The Dirt was compiled by Lee Dorrian, Dave Everley, Michael Hann, Paul Henderson, Jamie Hibbard, Rob Hughes, Dave Ling, Mick Wall, Henry Yates

Bennington on stage with Linkin Park in 2014.

everyone to want more; to go away and play it again when the record was over, instead of giving them too much," the singer said.

It worked. *Hybrid Theory* reached No.2 in the US and has since been awarded diamond-selling status, placing it alongside such all-time greats as Led Zeppelin's *IV*, Michael Jackson's *The Wall* and *Thriller*, AC/DC's *Back In Black* and Def Leppard's *Hysteria*.

By the time he was 23, Bennington was the frontman for one of the biggest bands in the world. But despite the fame, status and financial rewards that this brought him, the confusion and sadness of the previous years never went away. "I'd wake up and have a pint of Jack Daniel's to calm down," he told writer Tom Bryant. "Then I'd pop a bunch of pills."

This often meant not leaving the house, and instead he would simply hide alone in his closet. "I'd shack up in there in the dark and shake all day."

Bennington was the last member to join Linkin Park, an out-of-towner and also their youngest member, but it was his addiction to alcohol and weed that really set him apart from the rest of the band. "I didn't realise how big a problem it was, I thought they just didn't understand me," he admitted to Bryant. "They said that I was two people – Chester and then that fucking guy."

In March 2003, when *Hybrid Theory*'s follow-up, *Meteora*, had chalked up six million sales in the US alone, having entered the *Billboard* chart at No.1, it became abundantly clear that Linkin Park were not, as some thought, just a flash in the pan. Although perhaps inevitably their rapid rise brought fans and haters in equal numbers, with critics largely falling into the latter category, the band had become bona-fide game changers – the saviours of the nu-rock explosion.

Bennington and Linkin Park were still getting used to it all. "You get a lot of people who say: 'Jesus, you sold seventeen million albums, how are you going to top that?' and they've so missed the point," he told *Metal Hammer*. "They've mistaken us for a band that's into this purely for success. It's actually pretty upsetting to be seen simply as this 'big-selling band', it depersonalises you into a sales figure. It makes us into this overnight thing, which just isn't the case."

'Despite the fame, status and financial rewards, the confusion and sadness of the previous years never went away.'

Many of the old frailties of the past remained. *Meteora* was mostly about being lied to.

"You don't suddenly get issued with a new heart, a new soul and a new head when your record sells a few copies, y'know?" he observed. "You still have all of the same insecurities as before, maybe even a few more because the image people have of you is so incommensurate with the image you have of yourself. That's partly why we've retreated into the music so deeply, as a way of reminding yourself who you are amid the bullshit that gets spoken about you."

Meanwhile, collaboration with hip-hop superstar Jay-Z on the 2004 EP *Collision Course* confirmed Linkin Park's entry to the league of A-Listers, although as Bennington later admitted to *Classic Rock*: "For rock fans in general, that might have been hard to swallow, but the average Linkin Park fan found it really exciting. A lot of hip-hop fans have since come up to me and said it turned them on to rock music, so in that sense it wasn't a bad thing to do."

Living the dream: Bennington (second left) with Stone Temple Pilots.

Behind the scenes, in the three years between *Meteora* and its more experimental follow-up *Minutes To Midnight*, Bennington divorced his first wife, and also realised he needed to seek professional help in order to be able to get along with his bandmates.

"We did some counselling, and the guys really opened up and told me how they felt," he said. "I had no idea that I had been such a nightmare until I got a good dose of 'here's what you're really like'."

Bennington got sober and prayed a lot, claiming to have "learned not to take God for granted any more". Wearing a cross on a chain around his neck, he professed to be in the best shape of his life physically, mentally and spiritually.

Linkin Park's third, fourth and fifth albums, *Minutes To Midnight*, *A Thousand Suns* and *Living Things*, all made in part with producer Rick Rubin (and aided by Mike Shinoda), continued the band's escape from nu metal's gravitational pull. Rubin, who had produced records for the Beastie Boys, Run-DMC, Slayer, the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Tom Petty among others, spoke highly of the band and insisted of *Midnight*: "It doesn't sound like rap-rock. It's a very melodic, progressive record." Listen closely enough to that record and you'll even hear a Mellotron!

CHRIS SCHWEGLER/ATLASICONS.COM

Bennington fronting star supergroup Kings Of Chaos, which he joined just a year ago.

At this point it could have been argued that nobody really knew who Linkin Park were any more, including the group themselves. Out of the blue, Paul McCartney declared himself a fan by joining the band and Jay-Z on stage during a televised appearance at the Grammy awards. "He said he liked our music and that he had our CD. It was a surreal experience," a disbelieving Bennington marvelled.

When, back in 2007, I asked Bennington and Linkin Park bassist Dave Farrell whether they felt the band belonged in a magazine called *Classic Rock*, the pair stared at one another momentarily. "That's a good question, man," Bennington finally responded. "When I saw that *Classic Rock* were interviewing us, I thought: 'This is a step up.' And I hope that in the fullness of time we'll be considered worthy of inclusion in such a magazine. We're still a young band, but our ultimate goal is to keep on improving."

When reminded of his wearied dismissal of *November Rain*, Bennington admitted: "GN'R are one of my favourite bands, and that's a perfect example of how things change. People lose interest quickly these days. At six and a half minutes, *The Little Things Give You Away* could perhaps be considered [our own] *November Rain*. My only hope is that it gets to the punch a little quicker. Six years ago we'd have shaved three minutes off that song."

Of course, *Minutes To Midnight* topped the *Billboard* chart, with first-week sales figures of 622,000 making it that year's fastest-selling album so far. Equally inevitable, though, Linkin Park's diehards slated the band for marginalising rapper Mike Shinoda and calling the album "completely boring", "a fake piece of crap" and even "a sad joke".

Away from Linkin Park, in 2005 Bennington co-founded a "darker and moodier" band called Dead By Sunrise. At around the same time, he divorced his first wife (he would later marry the former *Playboy* model Talinda Bentley). He was also among the names linked with succeeding Scott Weiland in Velvet Revolver in '08.

And in May 2013, while there was still no offer from Depeche Mode, Bennington received the call he'd awaited all his life. His boyhood heroes Stone Temple Pilots had parted ways with their long-time lead singer Scott Weiland and sought a replacement. Bennington was thrilled to accept, and stayed with them for two years in tandem with his commitments to Linkin Park.

Last September he became a member of the supergroup Kings Of Chaos, which also included Matt Sorum, Duff McKagan, and Gilby Clarke as core members. However, the darkness never quite went away. In an interview he did this year, Bennington revealed how, during 2015 and '16, he had spent "two years trying to hold my world together" due to "a bunch of stuff in my personal life that just went fucking crazy". He talked about how he would attempt to stay out of the "bad neighbourhoods" that remained in his head.

And yet from the outside, nobody knew. Two weeks before Bennington took his own life at his home in Palos Verdes, California, he had appeared on top of the world. When Linkin Park played in London, photographer Awais Butt remarked that Bennington had "jumped around like a loon, smiling, looking totally ecstatic and giving it his all".

On that same day, former Skin/Red White & Blues guitarist Myke Gray encountered the singer at the gym where he works. "After I told him I'm a big fan of his music, he shook my hand, looked me in the eyes and said: 'Hi, I'm Chester.' We talked about fitness and yoga and he was the sweetest guy. In sixteen years of personal training, that's a very rare experience. Throughout the thirty minutes that we shared, I felt only good energy from him."

Ironically, in one of his final interviews Bennington implored that people with self-destructive thoughts should "talk to someone about it", adding: "I'm fortunate enough to be a member of some twelve-step programs. I know exactly who I am, I know exactly what I'm made of and I'm totally happy with it."

If you need to talk to somebody about a problem, The Samaritans can be contacted by calling 116 123. The service is free. Also see www.samaritans.org. Linkin Park have set up a suicide prevention website at chester.linkinpark.com

ALAMY

CHESTER RIP

The stars pay tribute

"I am in tears. Chester had just told me how happy he was. He was such a sweet and talented man. Feel so sad for his family, band-mates and fans."
Nikki Sixx

"Gracious, kind & humble – a rare combination in Rock & Roll. Deeply saddened."
Lars Ulrich, Metallica

"We can never know someone's pain. Prayers to Chester's family in this tragedy. If you need help REACH OUT."
Paul Stanley, Kiss

"Literally the most impressive talent I've ever seen live! Vocal beast!"
Pop singer Rihanna

"RIP, far too young."
David Coverdale

"Jesus, no…'
Corey Taylor, Slipknot/Stone Sour

"RIP, Chester B"
Duff McKagan

"RIP Chester Bennington. I still remember the 1st day I went in the basement at Warner Bros Records Burbank to hear you."
Nile Rodgers, Chic

"RIP Chester"
Cypress Hill

"Artists are people compelled to bring beauty into a world that can be so dark. It makes sense then that artists are always conscious of darkness."
Hayley Williams, Paramore

"When life leaves us blind, love keeps us kind. Rest easy, sir."
Nickelback

"Bruv, I can't lie I'm so upset. Serious."
Hip-hop singer Stormzy

"So sorry to hear this news. Sending so much luv, strength & light to his family, kids and band."
Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson

"I am so shocked and saddened by this tragedy of yet another amazing artist taking his life."
Sully Erna, Godsmack

RIP

Thank you and good night.

Melvin 'Deacon' Jones

December 12, 1943 – July 6, 2017

Walter Trout has led the tributes to the blues-rock organist, 73, calling him a "mentor, teacher and dear friend". Besides being a member of Chicago's Baby Huey & the Babysitters, Jones played with Curtis Mayfield, Freddie King and John Lee Hooker, among many others. "Had Deacon not put me in his band back in the mid-1970s, my life would have been very different," wrote Trout.

Kenny Shields

Died July 21, 2017

The lead singer of veteran Canadian rockers Streetheart has succumbed to heart failure in Winnipeg. He was 69. Formed in 1977, the group amassed six gold and four platinum records in their homeland. The nation's own 'metal queen', Lee Aaron, tweeted: "There's great sadness today over the loss of a great Canadian talent."

Michael Johnson

August 8, 1944 – July 25, 2017

Born in Colorado, Johnson was a pop, country and folk singer-songwriter and guitarist, best known for his 1978 hit song *Bluer Than Blue*. He was also a member of Denver, Boise & Johnson along with John Denver. Johnson, 72, underwent quadruple-bypass heart surgery ten years ago, but the cause of death is yet to be confirmed.

David Zablidowsky

Died July 14, 2017

The bassist for New York-based metal band Adrenaline Mob lost his life unexpectedly in a freak three-car accident in Florida that left seven others injured. Zablidowsky, who also played with Trans-Siberian Orchestra, was just 38 years old. The fatality happened when they stopped to fix a flat tyre and a tractor-trailer veered off the highway into two vehicles carrying the band.

Jimmy Nalls

May 31, 1951 – June 22, 2017

Nalls was a touring member of Sea Level, an offshoot of the Allman Brothers Band formed by Chuck Leavell, from 1976 to 1980. The 66-year-old is the third member of the Allmans' extended family to pass this year, following Gregg Allman and ABB drummer Butch Trucks. Nalls had been suffering from Parkinson's disease and endured one too many tumbles.

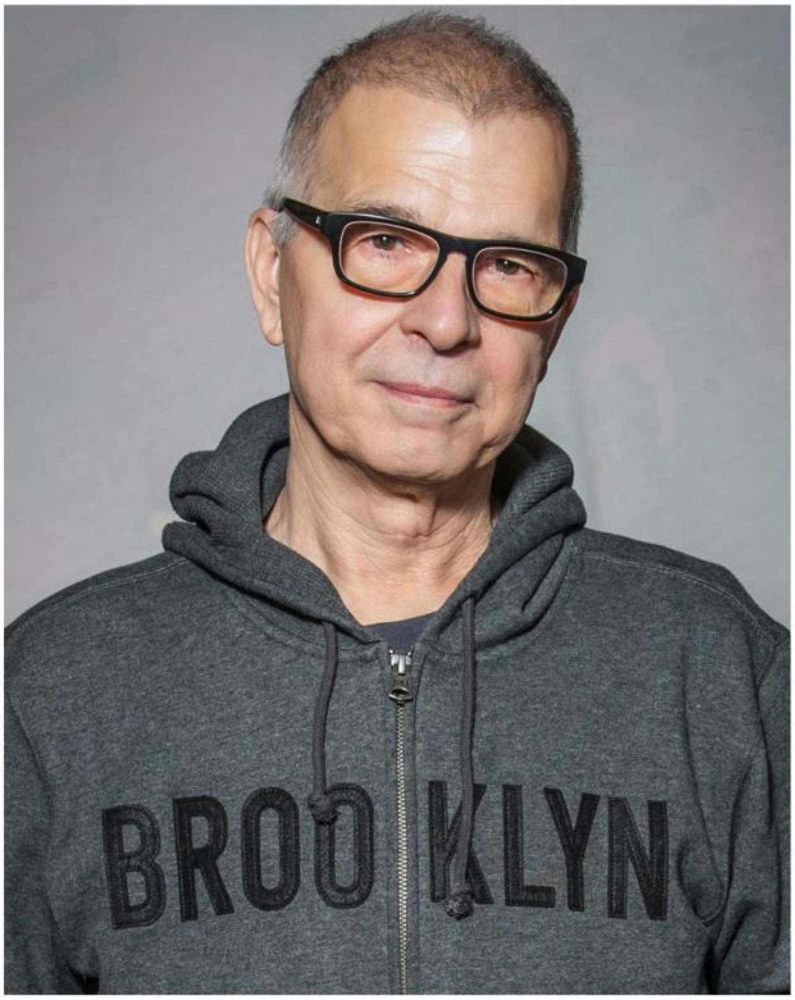
NEWS

Although some have dismissed the move as a publicity stunt, **Kid Rock** is serious about running for the US Senate in his native Michigan. A Republican, the 46-year-old singer, real name Robert James Ritchie, has now emerged as the favourite in a new poll. "[This is] not a hoax, it's a strategy and marketing 101! No plans for an album or anything else that has been the usual norm in the music business *or* politics," he says.

Orange Goblin have begun writing a new album, which they hope to release next spring. It will be the London band's debut for their new label Candlelight Records. Jaime Gomez Arellano (Ghost, Cathedral, Paradise Lost) is set to produce, with former Motörhead guitarist Phil Campbell making a guest appearance.

Under Cover, an 11-song album showcasing **Motörhead**'s best remakes, is released in September. It includes a previously unreleased cover of David Bowie's *Heroes*, recorded during the band's 2015 studio sessions for what turned out to be their final album, *Bad Magic*.

Revolution Saints, whose self-titled debut was rated among the best melodic hard rock releases of 2015, release a follow-up on October 13. *Light In The Dark* once again features Deen Castronovo (ex-Journey, Bad English), Doug Aldrich (Whitesnake, Dio) and Jack Blades (Night Ranger, Damn Yankees).



You Can Be Heroes

Bowie/T.Rex producer Tony Visconti fronts new TV music talent show.

September sees the arrival of a new music talent show on our TV screens, *Tony Visconti's Unsigned Heroes*, to be broadcast on the Sky Arts channel.

Visconti tells *Classic Rock*: "The whole thing started when I was a judge on two of the *Guitar Star* series on Sky Arts. In the second series I was chief judge, and after the great mutual experience we had, Sky wanted to do another series."

The format for the new series is based on a live show that Visconti has been doing in New York, called *The TV Show* (geddit?), where the legendary producer invites unknown musicians to perform a set of songs "that have something to do with me".

Over the years, Visconti has worked with a range of artists that includes everyone from T.Rex to Thin Lizzy and, most famously, David Bowie, which means the choice is wonderfully broad.

The new *Unsigned Heroes* show will follow a similar format, except extended over a series, while featuring young and, in Visconti's words, "unbelievably talented young people that just blew me away seeing what they could do".

The series builds to a live show finale – filmed at London's Union Chapel – that will be titled *Tony Visconti: A Life In Music*. It will include contributions from musicians such as former Police drummer Stewart Copeland, Bob Geldof, original Spider From Mars drummer Woody Woodmansey, and Visconti's occasional band Holy Holy, who feature Heaven 17 vocalist Glenn Gregory, whom Visconti says "does an incredible version of *Life On Mars*, a very hard song to sing".

The series will also see Visconti sending out Imelda May to uncover talent in the Celtic heartlands of Ireland and Scotland *[What, no Wales? – Welsh Ed]*, while Stewart Copeland will be heading to London, where The Police played their earliest gigs. Meanwhile, Visconti himself will look to the north of England.

They will soak up the atmosphere of each of their designated regions, uncovering the exciting, unheralded music scenes underneath all our noses. Visconti's incredible career will give a sense of purpose to this quest – he has worked with artists and bands from all over the UK and is attuned to the musical qualities of each locale.

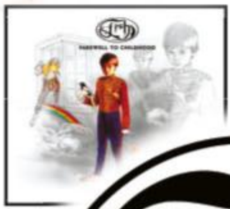
The trio will each find three new talents from their respective areas, and will work with them ahead of the big event at Union Chapel, which will be aired as a 90-minute special

As Stewart Copeland tells us: "This is not like any other TV talent show. This really is about the music, and only the music. I have been stunned by some of the talented people on the show, including one female rapper who sings the best version of *Children Of The Revolution* I've ever heard." **MW**

Sunsets On Empire

Raingods With Zippos

Farewell To Childhood



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PROG Magazine

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Bruce Dickinson gets booked

Maiden man's autobiography out in October!

Bruce Dickinson publishes his autobiography, his first, via Harper Collins on October 19. The Iron Maiden frontman wrote the contents of *What Does This Button Do?* by hand over the last couple of years and throughout the band's recently completed world tour for *The Book Of Souls*, which covered 39 countries and 117 shows since February 2016. Dickinson filled seven A4 notebooks with the tales of his life, including thirty years with Maiden, his childhood within the eccentric British school system, his early days as a performer, going solo, carving a parallel career via the flying of jumbo jets and, more recently, a triumph over tongue cancer.

The singer, who turned 59 on August 7, wrote two books of comedy fiction, *The Adventures Of Lord Iffy Boatrace* and *The Missionary Position* back in the 1990s. He makes a point of never talking about his personal life, so in that regard the autobiography is likely to be illuminating. Dickinson will undertake an international press tour to promote it. **DL**

Carl Palmer to receive Prog God award

ELP drummer rewarded for nearly 50 years of service to progressive rock.

Carl Palmer is to be named Prog God at the Progressive Music Awards 2017, in association with Orange Amplification, at a ceremony in London on September 14.

"This is a fantastic award to have, and I feel very honoured," Palmer says, "but I also feel a little bit sad that Keith Emerson and Greg Lake, who both died last year, aren't here as well. They played such a big part in the progressive movement, and in helping me to get where I am, so I'm accepting it in honour of them as well."

Meanwhile, the drummer has lined up some shows with his band ELP Legacy. They can be seen at: St Helens Citadel November 17, Pwllheli HRH Prog Festival 18, Wavendon The Stables 19, Glasgow Audio 24, Howden Shire Hall 25, Gateshead The Sage 27, New Brighton Floral Hall 28, Wimborne Tivoli 29, Southampton 1965 Club 30. The project will then play two shows at Trading Boundaries in Sussex (December 1-2) and complete their UK tour in London (venue TBC) on December 3. **DL**

NEWS

Black Country Communion will play two UK shows to promote their fourth album, *BCCIV*, which is released on September 22. They play Wolverhampton Civic Hall January 2 and London Hammersmith Apollo 4. The first single from the album will be *Collide*.

The 50th anniversary of the **Rolling Stones** album *Their Satanic Majesties Request* is celebrated with a limited-edition deluxe double vinyl/double hybrid Super Audio CD edition on September 22. It contains both the stereo and mono versions of every track, all newly remastered by Bob Ludwig.

Futher to last month's In The Studio report with **Tax The Heat,** the band have confirmed that their as-yet-untitled second full-length album will be produced by Evansson.

New supergroup **Sons Of Apollo** will see former Dream Theater members Mike Portnoy and Derek Sherinian reunite. They will be joined by bassist Billy Sheehan, Jeff Scott Soto and former GN'R guitarist Ron 'Bumblefoot' Thal.

Following their appearance at the Ramblin' Man Fair, **Extreme** (pictured) have announced the following dates: Newcastle Academy December 13, Glasgow Academy 14, Leeds Academy 16, Birmingham Academy 17, Bristol Academy 18, London Brixton Academy 20. Support comes from Tax The Heat, Blues Pills and the Dirty Thrills.

LOST NWOBHM

WELCOME BACK

Thunderstick

The enigmatic Samson drummer and NWOBHM cornerstone returns with first solo album in 30 years.

Barry Graham Purkis is the first person to admit that Barry Graham Purkis is no name for a rock star. But add a sinister ski mask and the *nom de guerre* Thunderstick and you have one of British rock's most memorable figures. As an early member of Iron Maiden and, most famously, Samson, the drummer was a prime mover in the NWOBHM scene before putting together his own eponymous band in the 1980s. Now he's back with a new recod, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*.

Why has it taken more than 30 years to release a new album?
It wasn't through lack of trying. But music changes and the music industry changes, and you get a bit distant from it. But this is something I've been working on for a long time. I've put a lot into it. It's even got a ballad, this thing called *I Close My Eyes*.

> "Samson weren't just out to take drugs and find women."

You first came to prominence in Iron Maiden and then Samson. How do you look back on the NWOBHM scene now?
It was great to be part of that. It was an exciting time. It would never happen again. But it is hard to take when Bruce Dickinson stands there and says that he felt Samson were just all out to take drugs and find women. [Laughs] I mean, to a certain extent we were. But we were serious musicians as well.

Where did the idea for the ski mask come from?
Apart from Keith Moon and John Bonham, there weren't many drummers that people knew. The most you could see was the top of their head. They were faceless. So I decided to create a faceless drummer, and that's when Thunderstick became my alter ego.

What are the best bits about wearing a mask to work?
Well, it gets you noticed. It got me the front cover of *Sounds* magazine, which was the issue where the phrase New Wave Of British Heavy Metal was coined. And when I started doing it, it was great fun. There was no social media, nobody ever saw my face. I even had a mask specifically for soundcheck. But then I started becoming Thunderstick.

What do you mean by that?
It sounds ridiculous, but I became this other person. It got to the point where I was becoming Thunderstick five miles down the road from the place we were playing. It started to take over my personality. It got overwhelming. It was strange for the band.

It's fifteen years since the death of Samson guitarist and founder Paul Samson. Do you think he gets the respect he deserves as a musician?
No. I think he's a really underrated guitarist. Paul was a great friend and a brilliant musician. He had this sound like a mountain. It was like playing alongside two or three guitarists at the same time. Samson should have been bigger than we were, and that was down to bad management decisions. They were just chartered accountants who wanted to be on the scene.

Will we have to wait another 33 years for a new Thunderstick album?
I hope not. But I'm writing a book now. I kept a day-to-day diary of that whole period from Samson and my solo career. It'll be Thunderstick unmasked. **DE**

Something Wicked This Way Comes is self-released and is available now.

EXTREME: KEVIN NIXON

> **"We write politically, but we just want to be good old-fashioned rock'n'roll."**

★ HIGH HOPES

The Dirty Thrills

The Europe-endorsed blues-rockers are ready for stardom, but not for swimming in cold lakes.

As Louis James discovered back in 2015, *Classic Rock* has readers in high places. "Joey Tempest hand-picked us to support Europe because he saw us in the magazine," the Dirty Thrills frontman says, smiling. "That was our first proper taste of being where we feel we belong. And the response was phenomenal. So, y'know – thanks!"

We can't take all the credit. It's taken talent and tenacity for the London-based quartet to get from their formation in 2012 to their current hot-tip status – not to mention a rhino-thick skin.

"It's tough," says James. "One minute you get thrown a lifeline, the same day it gets ripped away. We played with the Scorpions for ten thousand people. Then nothing. On our last tour of Europe, the engine flooded and it took all our earnings to get our gear home."

Lately, for the Dirty Thrills the pendulum has swung back in the right direction. After a couple of appetite-whetting EPs and 2014's self-titled debut album, they've just signed to Frontiers, and James says their latest, *Heavy Living*, is the one to judge them on. "The first album, we were still finding our feet, and the production let it down. On this one we worked with James Loughrey, who's worked with Skindred, Robert Plant, Jimmy Page. It was all about capturing our live sound. Because you need to see us live – I'm throwing mic stands, jumping off stage, doing backflips…"

FOR FANS OF…

"We like the classic stuff – Zeppelin, Free, Bad Company, Small Faces, and modern stuff like Rival Sons," says James. "Rival Sons were one of the reasons we started this band, actually. I put a post out saying: 'Singer seeking band, trying to do Rival Sons, White Stripes, Black Keys meld'. The *Pressure & Time* album is awesome.

"We recorded at Monnow Valley in Wales, and you could feel the history," says James. "Sabbath recorded there and Ozzy used to swim in the lake. I didn't, it was January when we did the album. But that might have helped me hit the high notes, with the old testes going back up into the body."

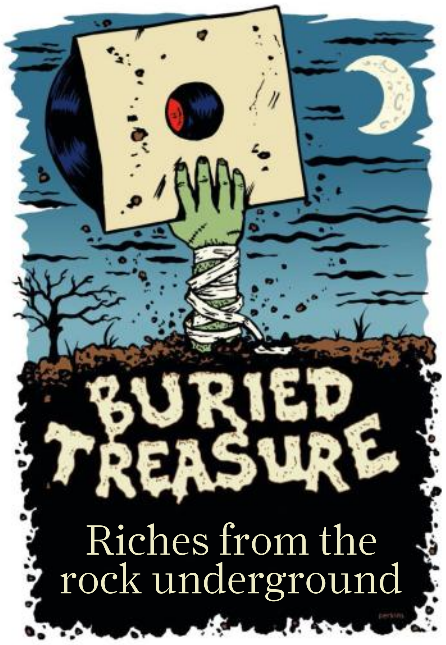
James's scream is certainly one of the band's selling points (he cites Robert Plant as his touchstone). But the songwriting is strong too, broadly based in blues-rock but with a tendency to shift gears. "Changing tempos, changing feels," the singer says. "*Law Man* is like an Aerosmith song, *The Brave* has an Arabic intro then it's grungy and heavy. Every band says this, but I do feel we've got something different."

The lyrics are a mix of weighty and and frivolous. "*Law Man* is about how the white man decimated the native American land," explains James. "That leads into *Hanging Around*, which is about a native American who has been hanged, and *Death* is forcing him through the underworld. We write politically, but we just want to be good old-fashioned rock'n'roll."

And, if James is honest, he just wants to be a good old-fashioned rock'n'roll star.

"The most famous person I've ever met," he muses… "was Brian May, at an awards show. So many people wanted a photo, that by the time it came round to meeting me he kinda couldn't be arsed. Could I handle that, people constantly pulling at me? Oh God, I'd love it. That's one of the dreams, isn't it? Bring on the pulling!" **HY**

Heavy Living is released on September 15 via Frontiers.



GRAIL

Grail, Metronome, Germany, 1971. £350+

Grail is one of the most enigmatic underground UK rock albums of its era. It's ambitious in its use of many different instruments, and it also features a multitude of ethnic influences, such as the Egyptian-tinged flute melodies on *Camel Dung*, manic Cossack-style riffing on *Czechers*, and the psychedelic sitar of the excellent title track. Such experimentation in rock would be almost unthinkable these days.

Grail were formed in 1968 by Terry Spencer, lead guitarist of London freakbeat legends The Game. However, by the time this, their sole album was recorded, Spencer had already departed, although he is credited as a co-writer.

The album is notable due to the mysterious involvement of Rod Stewart as producer. Apparently Rod was close friends with Grail manager Bob Pearce, and was thus roped in. It's hard to see him being a fan of what Grail were doing!

'The album is notable for having Rod Stewart as producer.'

Opening track *Power* will be the one of main interest to headbangers here, with it's hard-hitting, doomy power chords, pounding drums, occult lyrics, wild soloing and the snarling vocals of Chris Williams. Elsewhere there are heavy moments interspersed with mellower folky moods and general weirdness.

Recorded at London's Tangerine Studios in 1969, the album didn't receive a UK release. It was first issued in France by Barclay in 1970 (with strikingly different artwork), then by Germany's Metronome in 1971, by which time Grail had unfortunately ceased to exist. **LD**

NEWS

Status Quo have announced that their November tour, previously announced as unplugged, will be a 'plugged in' electric one instead. Since Rick Parfitt's death last Christmas, Quo say that "the band is not the same – it can't be and shouldn't be – and the plan has changed too. We're still listening to the fans, we always have, and we're hearing that this is what they still want. We're going to give it to them."

Mollie Marriott, daughter of former Small Faces and Humble Pie singer/guitarist Steve Marriott, releases a new album, *Truth Is A Wolf*, on November 3 via Amadeus Music.

The End Of The End, a chronicle of **Black Sabbath**'s final tour, can be seen for one night only in cinemas worldwide on September 28. For details go to www.blacksabbathfilmtickets.com.

The much-discussed **Freddie Mercury** (pictured) biopic, first talked about 12 years go, is now back on track with Rami Malek having been chosen for the starring role. The 36-year-old American-Egyptian actor replaces Sacha Baron Cohen, who fell out with Brian May and Roger Taylor over their vision for the film.

Keith Richards says that the **Rolling Stones** are going to record new songs "very, very shortly", although no release date has yet been mentioned for what would be the Stones' first album of original material in 12 years.

LOST ALT.ROCK

WELCOME BACK

The Dream Syndicate

Almost three decades since their last album, how did the Dream guys find themselves recording again?

When Steve Wynn called a halt to his band in 1989, he thought he would stop hearing the words 'of the Dream Syndicate' after his name within a year. That didn't happen. No matter that he made solo records, recorded with Green On Red's Dan Stuart as Danny & Dusty and with his all-star sports-themed group the Baseball Project, he was always Steve Wynn 'of the Dream Syndicate'. That's because the Dream Syndicate were one of the unforgettable groups of the 1980s: an outfit who mixed psychedelia, classic rock and a jam-band looseness in songs that defined LA's Paisley Underground scene.

In 2012 he reunited the group to play live, and now they've made their first album in 29 years, *How Did I Find Myself Here?*. So what kept them?

How come the Dream Syndicate are back? Have you had enough of writing songs about baseball?

There are more baseball songs to be written, but that's just one of the things I do. I've enjoyed playing the shows with the Dream Syndicate, without trying to slavishly imitate what we did before. Four years after we reunited, we felt it was time to make a record and if it excited us, we would finish it and put it out. If it didn't, we'd just forget about it. The new album, to me, feels like if we had made [debut album] *The Days Of Wine And Roses* now. It doesn't sound like it, but it has the same motivations behind it.

Do you feel like you have to deliver what the old fans expect?

We like the long songs – I got excited we had a new song that we could stretch out. We recorded it with no road map, and it's really a pop song surrounded by a lot of stuff. I love sprawling, epic, free-form, lightning-in-a-jar stuff. That and *John Coltrane Stereo Blues* will be the whole live show [laughs].

"I love sprawling, epic, free-form, lightning-in-a-jar stuff."

For a while you were the buzziest band around. Was it difficult to adjust when that stopped?

It's a weird feeling when that happens. For that first year, I would go to a newsstand in Hollywood and flick through the magazines. Every one I picked up had something about the band, and after a while I took it for granted: that's how life's going to be. But then other things come along and other bands get the attention. But eventually you realise that's how it is for every band.

You're a Los Angeleno who supports the New York Yankees – the most hated team in baseball. How could you do that?

I come from LA but I've always loved New York. So when I moved there I wanted to be a fan of a New York team, but it had to be a team in the other league from the LA Dodgers so there wouldn't be a conflict. And as time went on I began to feel like a New Yorker, so the Yankees became my team. I still like the Dodgers, though.

Would you swap places with Steve Wynn the casino tycoon? You'd be extremely rich, but you wouldn't have had a musical career.

Not a chance! I love my life. **MH**

How Did I Find Myself Here? is released on September 8 via Anti-.

FREDDIE MERCURY: GETTY; JUAN CARLOS QUINDOS DE LA FUENTE/PRESS

GETTY

SHOP TO THE BEAT

Rock-branded anything is big business.

It doesn't seem too long ago that the only place you saw band names and logos was on their records and concert posters, and in magazines. The idea of proper 'merchandising' – slapping an artist's image or album artwork on anything and everything – only really started to get into gear in the 70s. Nowadays, everybody's cashing in with T-shirts, hats, scarves, jackets and just about every item of clothing – very often making more money from the merch than from record sales.

Major artists, with huge fan bases, have also branched out into branded beer, spirits, condoms and almost anything else that has space for a logo, a name or an image to be slapped on it. And unless you've spent most of your life under a stone or in a Kiss Kasket, you'll be aware that Kiss – make that Gene Simmons (pictured) – have taken the big-bucks art of merchandising to a new high (or maybe a new low) with a mind-boggling array of branded products. A Kiss pinball machine? Obviously!

RAW POWER

Rock And Flipping Roll

Forget computer games – get some proper bells, whistles, flippers and balls in your living room.

Even in the age of sophisticated computer games, virtual reality and other ways to waste your time, there's still something deeply satisfying about pinball machines. It's all to do with the flashing lights, the clunks, clangs and bells, the clickety-click noise of the score barrels rapidly rotating in a blur of numerals and, ultimately, if you've nailed it, the 'clunk' that tells you you've racked up enough points to get a free game.

On the other hand, you'll also experience the horror and helplessness of seeing that silver ball heading right between the flippers, so you give it a calculated nudge… and get the deflating sight of the word 'TILT' lit up to deliver the sickening news that it's game over.

When pinball machines first began to appear in Britain in the 1950s, often in American-styled coffee bars, the thought of actually having one in your home was ridiculous. But today you can even have rock-related ones designed around the band of your choice, like this AC/DC machine (£5,500) from The Games Room Company (who also do jukeboxes and other retro/vintage entertainment goodies). Embellished with AC/DC cabinet artwork, two separate ramps, a lower play field, eight drop targets, a ball-shooting cannon, a mechanised Hell's Bell, a TNT detonator and the Devil's Jukebox to play AC/DC music, it looks the business. Get one of these in your living room and your mates will be camping on your doorstep.

The Games Room Company regularly have AC/DC, Metallica, Kiss, Rolling Stones and other rock/band-themed tables for sale (check out their website), and they also do custom tables to order – give them a call and they'll give you a price. Pinballs are wizard!

More information on 01932 282 123 or at gamesroomcompany.com.

Paul Henderson

Sharp Dressed Man

Rock 'n' Roll accessories

This month, @jamiehibbard is elegantly wasted in these three sartorial stand-outs.

Can't Quit Cartel Daggers hoody
Back in 2014, Steve Aitchison was left paralysed after a 20-foot fall. Following 10 months in hospital, his friends pulled together a day's worth of events to help motivate him for the future, and Can't Quit Cartel was born. Founded around the idea of rising from adversity, Steve's label does good things, like this limited-edition hoodie – a collaboration with tattooist Richard Lazenby, raising money for spinal cord research.
£38 @CantQuitCartel CantQuitCartel.com

Edwin ED-80 slim tapered jean
Developed for Edwin's iconic Kuroki Mill in Japan, the ED-80 is a modern slim-fit jean with a slightly tapered leg. With exclusive fabrics and hand-washing processes, this is one of Edwin's most popular styles, finished off with the denim house's famous attention to detail.
£179 @EdwinEurope Edwin-Europe.com

Filson Logger cap
Here at *Classic Rock* we love Filson. Admittedly everything they do is crazily expensive over here, but the quality and style are amazing. This logger cap is perfect for autumn.
£35 @Filson Filson.com

NEWS

As this issue went to press, **Black Star Riders** announced a winter tour of the UK. The play Wolverhampton Wulfrun Hall November 8, Edinburgh Queens Hall 9, Warrington Parr Hall 10, Hull University 12, Middlesbrough Empire 14, Sheffield Academy 15, Leicester Academy 16, Cambridge Junction 18 and Portsmouth Pyramid Centre 19. Support comes from London-based band Dirty Thrills.

A covers album by **UFO** is set for release in late September. *The Salentino Cuts* includes covers of songs by The Yardbirds, The Doors, Montrose, Mountain, Tom Petty and Robin Trower.
A new **Suzi Quatro** collection, *The Best Of: Legend*, is released on September 22 via Chrysalis Records. The 20-track set was personally curated by Quatro and will be available in gold-coloured double-vinyl format and CD as well as digitally.

UK rockers **The Struts** (pictured) have issued a single, titled *One Night Only*, via Polydor Records. It's the first music to be released from the band's forthcoming album, the highly anticipated follow up to their 2016 debut *Everybody Wants*. The Derby four-piece support Foo Fighters on a US tour in the autumn.

The White Buffalo, aka US singer-songwriter **Jake Smith**, releases his sixth full-length album, *Darkest Darks, Lightest Lights*, on October 13 via Earache Records.

WELCOME BACK

Ten Years After

After almost ten years away, a very different Ten Years After return with an impressive new album.

A LOT HAS happened to Ten Years After since their previous studio album in 2008. Frontman Joe Gooch and original bassist Leo Lyons have quit, plus they've weathered the sad news of the passing of Alvin Lee, the band's one-time guitar hero and singer. Alvin's legacy now rests with new boys Marcus Bonfanti (guitar/vocals) and bassist Colin Hodgkinson, plus surviving founder members Chick Churchill (keyboards) and Ric Lee (drums). Thankfully the band's heavy cross-breed of hard rock and jazzy blues is very much intact on exceptional new album *A Sting In The Tale*. Drummer Lee explains all.

This is the first studio album with the revised line-up.
It's been four years since Marcus and Colin joined the band and we're so much tighter now. We did a live album to begin with [2014's *The Name Remains The Same*], to let people know about the new line-up and also because Chick and I wanted to doff our hats to the heritage that Alvin had left us. When we play live we still do the classics – *I'm Going Home* [their showstopper at Woodstock in 1969], *Good Morning Little Schoolgirl*, *Hear Me Calling*, *Love Like A Man*, *Choo Choo Mama*.

How is the songwriting divided up on the new album?
We decided to split it four ways. Marcus became the hub. I'd go to London and write with him, then Colin and Chick would do the same. The album's very autobiographical. *Miss Constable* is partly about my wife's lawyer, *Two Lost Souls* is about someone I met not long after the split with my wife, and *Suranne Suranne* is a tribute to the actress Suranne Jones, because I fell madly in love with her. I saw her in a play in Manchester, met her and got an autograph.

What has Marcus Bonfanti brought to the band?
He's a terrific frontman. When Leo and Joe left, I asked Chick whether he wanted to carry on. He said: "Let's keep at it. If we get the right people we could do a lot." I was thinking the same thing.
We were struggling for a while, but eventually I found Marcus. He was supporting The Straits in Lichfield and had this amazing stage presence. I'd never seen anything like it. Afterwards I asked him to do demos of *I'm Going Home* and *Love Like A Man*. Two days later I had MP3s in my inbox.

> **"Marcus had an amazing presence – I'd never seen anything like it."**

Does Alvin's shadow still hang over Ten Years After?
I think it was more difficult when Joe joined. But Marcus has worked with a lot of people – Chuck Berry, Van Morrison, Paul Jones, PP Arnold – and I don't think it phases him at all. He was more or less brought up on the same stuff as Alvin, so there's that same affinity with the material. And we all get on tremendously well.

That wasn't always true of the original line-up, when there was a lot of tension within the band.
The abrasion between Leo and Alvin was one of the things that actually made it work. Our old tour manager at Chrysalis was Derek Sutton, who later became the adviser on *This Is Spinal Tap*. He once said to me: "Bloody hell, those two! Are they always at it like that? How do you manage?" I went: "I'm just a buffer, really." And that quote ended up in *Spinal Tap*. I can't claim that it was definitely taken from me but, let's face it, it's not a usual line. **RH**

A Sting In The Tale is out on September 29 via Fast Western.

> "There are worse things to be compared to than Led Zeppelin."

★ HIGH HOPES

Greta Van Fleet

The Michigan rockers have converted a thousand cynics. You'll be next.

It's natural to be sceptical when Greta Van Fleet take the stage. Faced with the prospect of this cherubic Michigan quartet – average age 19 – the usual response is to fold your arms, arch an eyebrow and prepare a savage put-down to shout into your mate's ear. Then they start playing…

"It's always been that way," shrugs frontman Josh Kiszka. "When you're fifteen and you go into a bar to play rock'n'roll, you can see it in their faces. But after that initial jolt their minds change pretty quickly."

Given their youth, there's not a whole lot of back story to get through. It was 2012, says Josh, when he took up with twin brother Jake (guitar) and younger brother Sam (bass); they added Daniel Wagner (drums) a year later.

"Everyone has their different qualities," Josh explains. "Jake is the rock guy, Daniel is the soul man, Sam is the jazz type, I like world music. Daniel is a little docile. Sam is the classic smart-ass. Jake is a romantic, that classic picture of a man with a bottle and a guitar. And… I dunno, I can't say much about myself."

Let's cast Josh as 'the screamer'.

"It was kinda accidental," he says of discovering that somersaulting voice. "But I'm a terrible person to be a singer. I don't warm up and I'm out all night. What do I get up to? Revelry."

In fact Josh's exhilarating 'ooh-mama' screech is so reminiscent of a certain golden god – an impression rammed home by his twin's swaggering blues-rock riffage – that you'd be tempted to roll out the 'next Zep' tag were that not invariably the kiss of death.

"When bands get compared to Zeppelin, it's not always in a favourable light," Josh considers. "But there are worse things to be compared to."

For now there's not a whole lot of music to judge Greta Van Fleet on, either. Their debut studio EP *Black Smoke Rising* has just four tracks, but they're all superb, with *Highway Tune* and *Safari Song* offering lean, hooky, old-but-new grooves, offset by *Flower Power*'s trilling mandolins and the title track's more modern vibe.

"I think it's a dynamic EP," says Josh. "It can be folk or rock'n'roll. It can be tongue-in-cheek or philosophical. *Flower Power* is about the splendours of love, *Safari Song* is our ode to the blues and *Black Smoke Rising* is about the lessons of history."

Of course, history is full of cautionary tales about bands who promised much but were sunk by the weight of expectation. And yet, faced with these four songs, Lava Records boss Jason Flom's proclamation that his boys are the "future of rock'n'roll" doesn't seem quite so ridiculous.

"Well, I don't know about that," says Josh. "I guess that'd be something we'd wear very proudly. But that means we have a lot of work to do." **HY**

Black Smoke Rising is out now via Lava Records.

FOR FANS OF…

"We love Led Zeppelin, and it's a great thing to be compared to," says Josh Kiszka. "But there's really no one album that's had a complete influence on me, because there are so many that are so damn good. Howlin' Wolf's stuff is incredibly influential. Joe Cocker. Wilson Pickett. Sam and Dave. Even John Denver."

The Moody Blues

Nights In White Satin

Dumped by a girlfriend, Justin Hayward remembered a gift she had given him and started writing a song that became a multimillion-selling, era-defining classic – and earned him not a penny.

Words: **Rob Hughes**

It's been a hit three times over, sold millions around the globe, appeared on film soundtracks and inspired more than 60 cover versions. There's even been a theme park ride named after it. Yet half a century after he wrote it, Justin Hayward still struggles to explain the enduring appeal of the Moody Blues' most famous song, *Nights In White Satin*. "It's a curious thing," he says, "because when I listen to the record there's just this big empty space and those wonderful echoes that we had in the studios at Decca. But there's a strange power to the song. It gave us a style that suddenly seemed to work for us. I think it identified the Moodies' sound."

First released in November 1967, *Nights In White Satin* was a masterpiece that bridged pop and symphonic prog, with a lyric ripped directly from Hayward's personal life – it finds him caught between ecstasy and despair, ruing the end of one love affair while embarking on another.

"There was a lot of emotion that went into the song," he affirms. "I was nineteen or twenty at the time, living in a two-room flat in Bayswater with Graeme [Edge, Moody Blues drummer] and our girlfriends. I came back from a gig one night, around four or five in the morning, when the birds were just twittering, sat on the side of the bed and wrote a couple of verses. The only people writing in the Moodies then were [keyboard player] Mike Pinder and myself. He'd been working on a song called *Dawn Is A Feeling*, which I'd heard him fiddling around with, and I knew the other guys were expecting something from me at rehearsal the next day."

Searching for some kind of metaphor for his emotional turmoil, Hayward remembered a recent gift he'd been given. "Another girlfriend, who was neither the one that had just dumped me or the one that I was then going with, had given me some white satin sheets. They just happened to be in my suitcase and I was trying them out in this place that Graeme and I lived in. They were very romantic-looking, but totally impractical."

When Hayward took the bones of the song into rehearsal the next day, his bandmates seemed less than enthusiastic, at least to begin with.

"I played it to the other guys and they were a bit nonplussed," Hayward recalls. "Then Mike said: 'Play it again.' So I did the first line, and he went [mimics the melody refrain] on Mellotron, and that's the phrase that started to get everybody else interested. Suddenly the others could see what parts they might play on it."

Shaped by producer Tony Clarke and arranger/conductor Peter Knight, *Nights In White Satin* became a sumptuous epic in the studio. It formed the centrepiece of the Moodies' second album, *Days Of Future Passed*, a dawn-to-darkness song cycle that made full use of the Mellotron's ability to simulate an orchestra. Topped off by a spoken-word poem, *Late Lament*, Hayward's song clocked in at nearly seven and a half minutes. *Nights* was duly edited down as a single, although not everyone at Deram, Decca's new subsidiary label, was convinced of its worth.

"We didn't have any power or control over anything," says Hayward. "The plugger, Tony Hall, went: 'I can't plug that!' and washed his hands of the whole thing. But people like [executive producer] Hugh Mendl thought it was a perfect way of demonstrating their Deramic Sound system, which was Decca's original purpose anyway. Then it started to really take off in France."

The single had already peaked at No.19 in the UK when it topped the French chart in February 1968. And while it may not have been the huge hit the label had hoped for at home, it was the Moodies' biggest success since reaching No.1 with the very different *Go Now* nearly three years earlier. Crucially, too, it marked the band's transition from R&B also-rans to torch-pop trailblazers, at a junction in time when psychedelia was splintering off into exciting new directions.

The album's credits include the London Festival Orchestra, but Hayward stresses that this was a fictitious guise for Decca's trusted in-house players. "The Festival Orchestra was a name that we made up," he explains. "It was a group of session musicians that Peter Knight quickly put together. The only time the orchestra comes in on *Days Of Future Passed* is halfway through the last verse of *Nights*. And even then it's just little diamonds – 'plink, plonk, plink, plonk'. Otherwise everything [orchestral] you hear on our recordings is Mellotron."

As the Moodies' reputation grew, so did that of their most iconic song. *Nights In White Satin* was reissued in 1972, making the Top 10 at home and reaching No.2 on the US *Billboard* chart. Seven years later, having by then been covered by such disparate artists as Eric Burdon, Percy Faith, Giorgio Moroder and Californian punks The Dickies, the single charted again in Britain.

The song continues to enjoy a prolonged afterlife. In 2008, South Carolina's Hard Rock Park in Myrtle Beach unveiled the *Nights In White Satin: The Trip* theme park, a sensory experience based on Hayward's tune, with on-board audio, digital effects and psychedelic imagery.

"There's a strange power to the song. It gave us a style that suddenly seemed to work for us. I think it identified the Moodies' sound."

These days Hayward juggles his solo career with life on the road with the Moody Blues alongside fellow *Days Of Future Passed* veterans Graeme Edge and bassist John Lodge. The trio draw from an illustrious back catalogue spanning decades, but *Nights In White Satin* occupies a special place in the set-list.

"There's still so much emotion when we play it," says Hayward. "It doesn't matter how well we do it in soundcheck, it's the audience that brings something magical to that song. The atmosphere in the room is suddenly different. There's a feeling to it that's quite electric."

Hayward's solo The Wind Of Heaven 2017 UK Tour runs Sept/Oct.

LONNIE'S BLUES

Prior to joining the Moody Blues in 1966, the teenage Justin Hayward signed a publishing deal with Tyler Music, owned by skiffle king Lonnie Donegan.

"It was a lousy deal," Hayward rues today. "It meant that none of the songs I wrote in my first eight years belonged to me."

The upshot of what Hayward calls his "biggest professional mistake" is that he has never received royalties for anything he wrote before 1973, including *Nights In White Satin*. To add further insult, "Lonnie's widow contacted me ten years ago and asked if I wanted to buy back the 12-string guitar that I'd written it on. She wanted a *lot* of money."

TONY GALE/ PICTORIAL PRESS LTD / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Looking neither moody nor blue: (l-r) Graeme Edge, Mike Pinder, Justin Hayward, Ray Thomas, John Lodge.

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
November 1967

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
UK No.9 (reissue, 1972)

PERSONNEL
Justin Hayward
Lead vocals, acoustic guitar
Mike Pinder
Mellotron, backing vocals
Ray Thomas
Flute, backing vocals
John Lodge
Bass, backing vocals
Graeme Edge
Drums, backing vocals
Peter Knight and the London Festival Orchestra
Orchestral arrangements

WRITTEN BY
Justin Hayward

PRODUCED BY
Tony Clarke

LABEL
Deram

6 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...

Pond

After already embracing psychedelia, rock, glam and more, they've just come up with their most expansive album yet.

Words: **Rob Hughes** Portrait: **Will Ireland**

Good luck nailing the sound of Pond. Since forming in 2008, the Australian quartet – Nick Allbrook, Joe Ryan, Jay Watson and Jamie Terry – have released a succession of kaleidoscopic albums bursting with psychedelia, pop-art, glam, space-rock and more besides.

Produced by Tame Impala vocalist/multi-instrumentalist Kevin Parker, *The Weather*, Pond's seventh album, is their most dazzlingly expansive yet. "We all bring our songs to the table, in varying degrees of completion, and from there they get 'Pond-ified'," says Ryan. "We try to take it up a notch with every album."

***The Weather* is Pond's first real concept album.**
"We stepped aside and let Nick write the majority of the lyrics for this one, regardless of whose song it was," Ryan explains. "So you get this theme developing, about today's general political climate in Australia. The songs touch on everything from ice [methamphetamine] epidemics in Perth to simple pleasures like sitting on the beach, to politicians and their weird agendas."

The band's musical playfulness is in direct contrast to some of the most venomous lyrics they've ever recorded.
Pond clearly have a lot to say about regressive attitudes in their home country and abroad. Songs like space-metal opera *Edge Of The World Pt.1* and *30,000 Megatons* pack a suitably explosive punch.

"Our Aboriginal population got pretty well fucked by the white colonial settlers," says Ryan. "Australia's still a very young country. It only became a British nation two hundred years ago, so we're still trying to find our place. Nick grew up in Derby, up north, and his parents were historians who were involved with both colonial and Aboriginal cultures, so his childhood brought him into contact with these issues and it's stayed that way throughout his life. I think this is the first album where he's really gone out and addressed that. When you read the lyrics, it's like: 'Oh shit, boy! You're spitting fire here, man.' Previous albums have hinted at this kind of behaviour, but this is the first time he's gone full out over the whole ten songs."

Pond have a shared history with Tame Impala. Watson continues to play in both bands, while Allbrook was TI's bassist for five years.
"I feel like everyone goes through a period in their twenties when they're inescapably confused about the world, but it had to be done," Allbrook explains of his decision to quit his former band in 2013. "I've always been a cynical chap, so I had trouble being completely vapid on the road. I ended up being in a big circle of self-flagellation, so I decided to not treat myself as badly as I did for a while. Even going away into the country by myself for ten days of silence changed my view on the world."

Tame Impala leader Kevin Parker was Pond's drummer for a while. Now he's their go-to producer.
"He finally got around to doing his weird thing with these songs after Tame Impala had been so busy last year," Ryan says of the guy who's overseen every Pond album since 2012's *Beard, Wives, Denim.* "I don't have the correct vocabulary to fully articulate my ideas to people you might hire. But Kevin understands when I ask something like: 'Can you make it shimmer like a coin in a fountain?'"

For all their weirdo psych tendencies, Pond are classic pop bunnies at heart.
"We haven't had a rainbows-out-of-our-earholes jam for some years now," says Allbrook. "In fact, we've been off the flower-child idea of things for ages. We just really like making pop songs. I see psychedelia as something that affords the listener a moment of transcendence. That doesn't necessarily mean it has to involve bell-bottom pants or fucking tie-dyed T-shirts or Jimi Hendrix replica guitars. As long as it's transportative, then that's psychedelic."

Their band members' varied musical tastes can play havoc on the tour bus.
As befits a band who are virtually unclassifiable, Pond's broad spread of influences is most apparent when travelling from gig to gig, which doesn't always make for a restful situation.

"We're always listening to tons of different things," says Ryan. "In fact I often dread getting stuck in the car with Jamie and Nick, because they just love their rap, whereas I'm a chord progression guy all the way. But when we get together in the studio our music becomes bigger than any one style. That's probably why we're such genre-spanners."

The Weather is out now via Marathon Artists.

LOST ICONS

THE LONG, STRANGE TRIP

With a new streaming Amazon documentary charting the far-out life and times of **The Grateful Dead**, we take a look back at this most idiosyncratic of bands, from the Summer Of Love through drugs, death, hanging with Hells Angels and creating a catalogue unique in American music.

Words: **Max Bell**

Has anyone outside the band's fan following – more a communion than anything – ever made sense of the Grateful Dead? To some they remain the ultimate arcane cult band, too hands-off for general consumption; the lost symbol of what rock music was like before the man, in the guise of corporate marketing, worked out how to fleece us all.

Perhaps they were too parochial. Even their latter-day publicist, Dennis McNally, admitted it was a struggle to explain the band to the uninitiated. "It was always a challenge because there's so much distraction about them," he said. "But if you ignore the rabid fans and the expected facts of American entertainment, there's a richness that fills your soul. They explored freedom and gave us a phenomenal revaluation of American values."

In Don Henley's song *The Boys Of Summer*, Henley pictured their myth as a disappearing dot on the horizon. "I was driving down the San Diego Freeway," he said, "and got passed by a $21,000 Cadillac Seville, the status symbol of the right-wing, upper-middle-class American bourgeoisie – all the guys with the blue blazers with the crests and the grey pants – and there was this Grateful Dead 'Dead Head' bumper sticker on it!"

Keith Richards didn't get them. "The Grateful Dead is where everybody got it wrong. Just poodling about for hours. Jerry Garcia: boring shit man. Sorry, Jerry."

Richards gave his opinion in the wake of the Dead's Fare Thee Well shows at Chicago's Soldier Field on the July 4 weekend of 2015, where they bid adieu and walked off with a cool $55 million gate, gross. Perhaps Keith, a pensioner with benefits if ever there was one, was merely miffed about that bottom line.

Of course, the Grateful Dead sold out like everyone else, but a fascinating new Amazon documentary called *Long Strange Trip* puts them back into focus. Neither damage limitation nor a rescue mission, *Long Strange Trip* provides a suitably fuzzy cultural framework and enough transcendentally euphoric music to delight the devotee and maybe sway the 'don't give a fuck' anti-Dead brigade.

Directed by Amir Bar-Lev and executive produced by Martin Scorsese, *Long Strange Trip* spins the clock back to the beginning, when Jerry Garcia was a five-year-old kid watching *Abbott And Costello Meet*

The Grateful Dead in 1970: (clockwise from top left) Bob Weir, Phil Lesh, Bill Kreutzmann, Ron 'Pigpen' McKernan, Mickey Hart, Jerry Garcia.

CHRIS WALTER/PHOTOFEATURES

First steps on a long strange trip: pre-Dead band The Warlocks circa 1965.

"They explored freedom and gave us a phenomenal revaluation of American values." Band publicist Dennis McNally

Frankenstein in 1948, a year after his father had drowned in a fly-fishing incident in northern California.

Garcia said: "It might have been the dead thing brought to life. Frankenstein's monster is, after all, a drive to reanimate, or to produce life, and it hit me in that archetypal centre." At that point, he decided, "I want to be concerned with weird."

Garcia created his own monster when he gave up wanting to be a bluegrass star like his hero Earl Scruggs, or a beatnik jug-band novelty act with his oldest friend Robert Hunter, instead hitting the electric switch. Fuelled by the left-wing politics and Cold War paranoia of the early 1960s, Garcia hung out in bookstores like Kepler's in Menlo Park, discovered cannabis and lost faith with reality.

He met Ron 'Pigpen' McKernan, whose father sold Garcia a banjo. Since Ron was an R&B fanatic he became the frontman. A long-haired teenager called Bob Weir had gravitated west from Colorado and, hooking up with Hunter, McKernan and Garcia, they became The Warlocks. Avant-garde composer Phil Lesh was brought in and told he was the bass player, although he'd never touched the instrument. The drummer was a natty-looking mod called Bill Kreutzmann who, like Weir, was underage and couldn't legally play in bars.

The Warlocks were okay, though very rough round the edges, and when they discovered that the prototype Velvet Underground on the East Coast also had that name, they might have called it a day. However, Garcia held one last band meeting in Palo Alto where they thumbed through a dictionary until the guitarist saw 'The Grateful Dead', a folklore reference to a dude who pays for the burial of an unknown corpse. "It was creepy, and only me and Phil liked it, but it was a striking combination of words," Garcia said.

Below: the Grateful Dead performing at Winterland in San Francisco, December 31, 1977.

The new band house in Haight-Ashbury became the crucible. "We learnt precision and technique," according to Weir. "It was fairly rigid, with lots of practice."

They still didn't have much style, since Garcia was holding on to his folk roots. "But that was too much frozen technique," he said. "It got sterile and inhuman, so I murdered it and went electric and we got a reaction."

One of guitarist Bob Weir's slogans for the band was 'Misfit Power'. Plenty of misfits enrolled.

As their idiomatic purity dripped away, they began a residency at Magoo's Pizza, mutating The Warlocks into the original Dead, playing five sets a night, six nights a week. "That made us good," recalled Garcia. "We were young enough to love the hard work."

What happened next had fundamental significance. The band began to hook up with Ken Kesey's Merry Pranksters, whose motto 'Never trust a Prankster. He will lie to you' appealed. So did the ready availability of the still-legal psychedelic drug LSD that the US government used on its own troops in experiments akin to chemical warfare. Kesey had a stash of the drug, and he started to hold Acid Tests, where Garcia and the boys became the live entertainment.

"It was a dollar to get in," Lesh recalls. "We weren't famous and we weren't even required to play, but with Pigpen out front we played a few tunes and discovered freedom. There was communication from the audience, not in words but fragments

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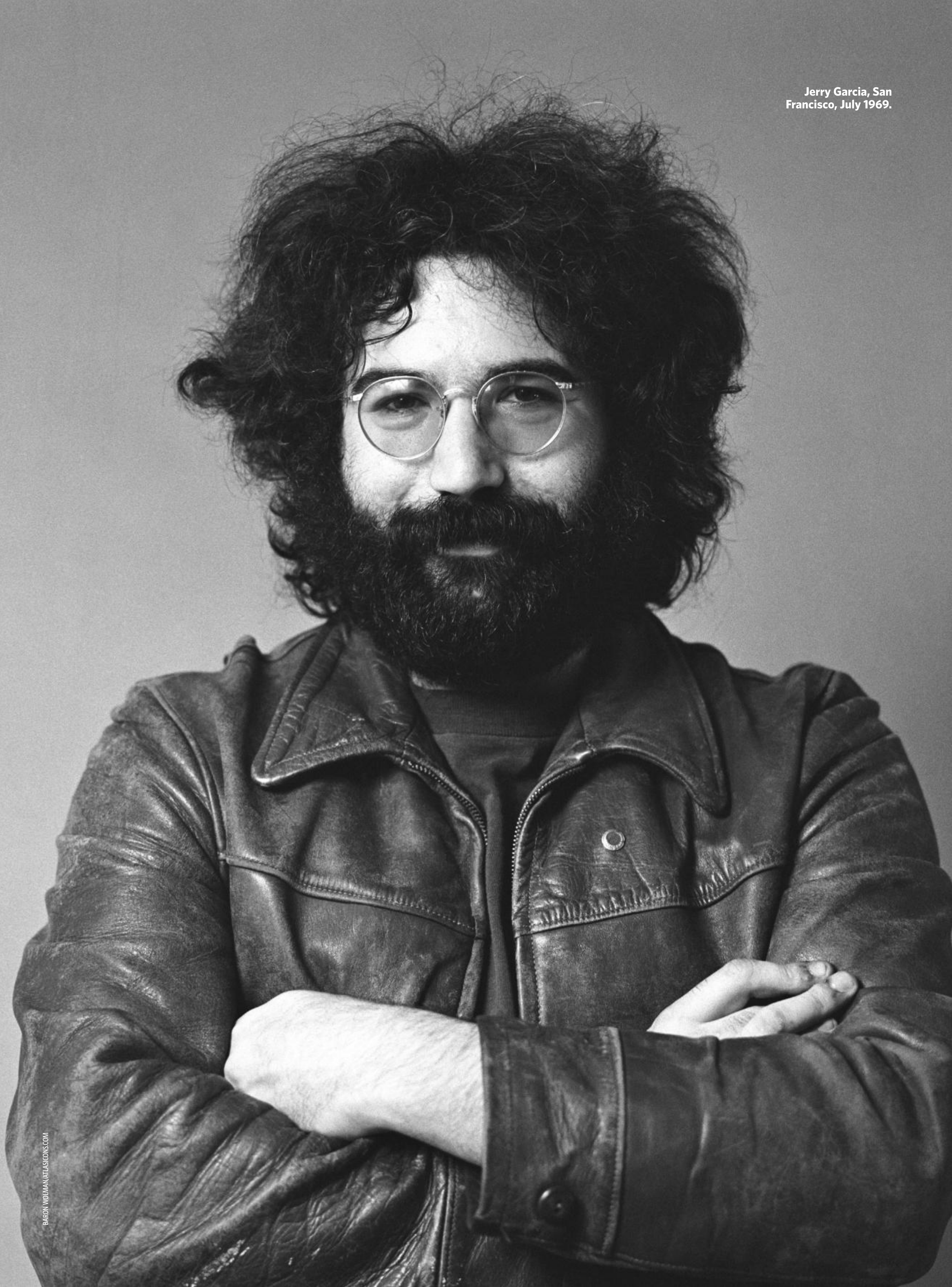


Jerry Garcia, San Francisco, July 1969.

BARON WOLMAN/ATLASICONS.COM

The Dead playing the Hollywood Music Festival near Newcastle-under-Lyme on May 24, 1970, on their first ever visit to the UK.

of ideas. That's how we evolved and learned to listen to each other as musicians."

The 16-year-old Weir thought "a lot of that stuff was dangerous, not always in a bad sense", but Kreutzmann ditched his preppy attitude. "The camaraderie was incredible," he said. "We saw how we could escape to another place." For Garcia, "discovering acid was the single most significant experience in my life."

In February 1966, Garcia had an epiphany after performing at one of Ken Kesey's famous Acid Test parties, where LSD was served like liquor. He realised he had no desire to build something permanent. Instead he wanted to create something "flowing and dynamic," and "not so solid you can't tear it down".

There was a feeling of peaceful rebellion gathering force on the Haight, where rents were cheap, the Victorian houses lovely and a steady stream of artists and beatniks coalesced to form the nascent hippie movement. "It wasn't really a revolution," said Garcia. "I didn't want to hurt anybody, just wanted an uncluttered life."

The band's home at 710 Haight-Ashbury became a commune, with what Weir calls "a lot of bitching about the milk, that kind of deal. It was a family. We played every day until we became like a bunch of fingers."

In 1967 the Grateful Dead recorded their first album, fuelled by speed and acid. Warner Brothers Records signed them on a whim – their wildest acts were Trini Lopez, Peter, Paul And Mary and Petula Clark – but only because RCA had already beaten them to Jefferson Airplane.

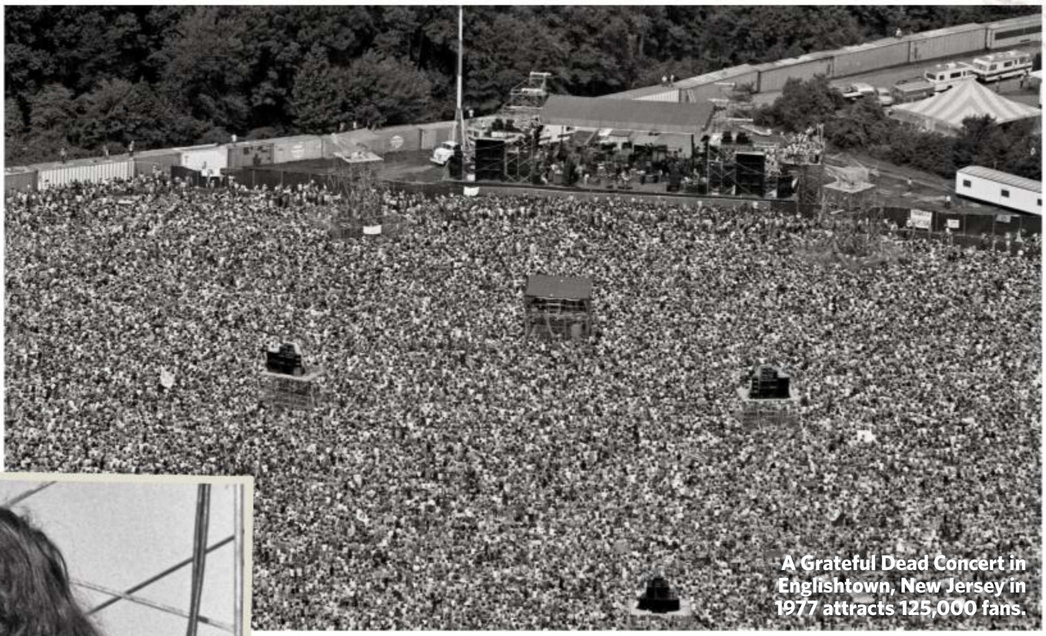
Unable and unwilling to provide the label with anything remotely commercial, the Dead delivered the experimental *Anthem Of The Sun* and *Aoxomoxoa*, whose signature tune *China Cat Sunflower* might have done the trick, before finding their feet with *Live/Dead*, using 16-track recording and flaunting a newly professional stance.

New second drummer Mickey Hart, whom Kreutzmann met at a Count Basie concert, added Eastern polyrhythms and left Kreutzmann to swing. It was a beatific moment for Garcia, who thought the six-piece ensemble (pianist Tom Constanten was "never a card-carrying member of the Grateful Dead", says Kreutzmann) so good "we can take this round the world. I wanted to get everyone up and dancing, but then that became a lie when I realised I couldn't guarantee anything."

The ill-fated concert at Altamont, which the Grateful Dead's manager Rock Scully helped organise, was a watershed moment. Learning that a black kid called Meredith Hunter had been beaten and stabbed to death by Hells Angels, and their friend Marty Balin from the Airplane had been knocked unconscious, the Dead got the hell out and headed home long before their own set.

Immediately post-Altamont, the Rolling Stones' stage manager, English-born Sam Cutler, handed in his notice to Mick Jagger and befriended Garcia, who asked him to oversee the Dead's first UK visit to England in 1970, where they played at the Hollywood Festival in Newcastle-under-Lyme. After the Stones, the Dead seemed like rubes to Cutler.

"Me and Garcia smoked a joint, and after thirty minutes he said: 'If the music business is a forest, then you come to a thicket, a break in the grass, and there's a patch of light and the smell of flowers.



A Grateful Dead Concert in Englishtown, New Jersey in 1977 attracts 125,000 fans.

Above: Rolling Stones tour manager Sam Cutler tries to calm the crowd at the ill-fated Altamont concert in California on December 6, 1969.

"Looking back, I feel I had a wonderful and amazing job. I was laughing for joy." Bob Weir

Well, that's the Grateful Dead.' For fuck's sake! But that's how they are.

"When we came to England they hadn't been abroad – they knew nothing about the money. They didn't know the difference between a shilling and a pound, though the fact we called our money LSD in pre-decimal days was found hilarious.

"They hired me cos I'd toured the Stones, and Garcia was fascinated by how they rolled their trip. The Dead actually had no idea about being in a major band and what it involved. They were like naïve children in a man's world. But what they did was to redefine what it was to be an American artist. It was like a constant struggle. And they had that American thing of, 'Wow, let's go and discover America,' whereas the idea of going off to discover England would be ridiculous."

To ensure he didn't drop the ball, Cutler was the only person in the entourage who never travelled with drugs. "Didn't need to. Whenever I needed them I could find them within thirty minutes."

In London, the Dead took their Super-16mm cameras out sightseeing. They went to the same stretch of the River Thames where Ringo Starr walked along the Kew towpath in the Beatles film *A Hard Day's Night*. They also filmed a Warners press conference where every time the lens was stuck in front of Pigpen he pulled his hat down – "I ain't saying nuthin'."

The era of classic Dead began in 1970. They released two brilliant albums – *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty* – both influenced by the close harmony singing of Crosby, Stills & Nash and The Band. For the *Workingman's Dead* sessions they hung a sign on the door at Pacific High Studio in San Francisco that said: 'Trespassers will be eaten.'

Behind closed doors, Garcia taught himself pedal-steel guitar and put the others through a ferocious pre-song ritual. He'd sit on a stool with his acoustic guitar, and whip Lesh and Weir, perched in front of him, into shape until they could make the notes on what was virtually a solo Garcia-Hunter concept.

Joe Smith, who had signed the band, and Warners were delighted with the product. "The previous two albums were like drones – nobody played them on the radio," recalls Smith.

Garcia explained their MO: "It's trial and error. A lot of error! One full moon, Weir said: 'Let's go to the zoo and record the animals.' We were so high. Or he'd say: 'Let's go hard out, hot and smoggy, and record clear air and do that as a real track.'"

They manhandled Smith, who was completely straight, into partaking in their helium-tank high jinks. "*Aoxomoxoa* was by far the most expensive project Warners ever had and they still wanted more money," he said. "They insisted they could be commercial and they came in with that *Aoxo*… album? I still can't pronounce it."

To Lesh it was all about "the moment and collective improvisation. When we were really on it, we could open the valve. And if the company didn't like it, we didn't give a shit. Fire us. We don't care."

To Kreutzmann, "it was keeping the feeling. I never kept time, because we wanted it to go so far out that you don't know what the song is. As long as it's just fucking outrageous, just keep playing."

Workingman's Dead and *American Beauty* finally offered a way out of the fog. Warners backed their hunch and took out huge billboards saying: 'Honor the Dead'. Their errant charges responded by shaping up. There were plans to perform in Hyde Park because their festival experiences, apart from Monterey, had been disastrous – their half-arsed Woodstock slot and the Altamont no-show hadn't improved their wider profile.

Now the audience was starting to grow, Garcia kept the Dead on the road constantly. Pigpen wasn't always around – his health was poor, his liver lacerated by constant boozing: brandy, Jack, Southern Comfort. He made the Europe '72 tour, where it was obvious his place in the group was at risk. He was a blues guy, and, with his cowboy hat, white vest and beard, the persona of the Dead to many. He looked like a biker and sang it rough, especially during his beloved *Turn On Your Love Light* that generally ran to thirty minutes in the early 70s. The trouble was, when the shuffle turned into a triplet, he couldn't deal with the changes and just fell by the wayside, standing somewhat pitifully stage left.

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Bob Weir and Donna Godchaux with the Grateful Dead at Santa Barbara Stadium on June 4, 1978.

Owsley Stanley (left) talking with Grateful Dead bassist Phil Lesh in 1975

Above: Ron 'Pigpen' McKernan (1945-1973) photographed in 1972.

As the LSD communion was going on around him, Pigpen warped out and deliberately drank himself to death. After he died on March 8, 1973 from internal haemorrhaging, aged just 27, the Dead's acid scientist Augustus Owsley Stanley (aka Bear) commemorated him on the album *History Of The Grateful Dead, Volume One (Bear's Choice)*. Ron 'Pigpen' McKernan was buried in Alta Mesa Memorial Park, Palo Alto, with an inscription that reads: 'Pigpen was and is now one of The Grateful Dead forever.'

After McKernan, the Dead got huge. Their new sound system, known as The Wall Of Sound, was an outrageous monolith designed by Owsley. Financed by the acid king's illicit fortune, it was the biggest PA ever built. Lesh's bass stack alone was 32 feet high. The entire rig contained 500 speakers. It drove the band's crew mad, but for a while they persevered.

The Dead's crew were legendary in their own right – punchers and cowboys who rode Harley-Davidsons and fired shotguns in battles with San Francisco band Quicksilver Messenger Service on their respective ranches. They shared the same women and got righteously messed up, but they worked like dogs. They were part of the invading swarm that came to England in 1970, '72 and '74, by which time they and the band were living in a cocaine-fuelled world, with plenty of heroin, nitrous oxide and booze to boot.

To tour organiser Sam Cutler it was "becoming a nightmare. They were dumb about business and every decision was the collective."

Backstage they were always visited by the local Hells Angels MCs. Reality wasn't on the agenda. The Angels made most people nervous, but Garcia insisted there was a seat at the table for evil as well as good. They were friends of the devil – what could he do? He neither condoned nor damned them. If people looked to the man dubbed Captain Trips (a phrase later adopted by horror author Stephen King in his novel *The Stand*) for guidance, he wasn't about to give it.

The band's latest additions, pianist Keith Godchaux and his vocalist wife Donna, were superfans who became Dead members. If Donna was their Janis Joplin, she wasn't always on the money, while Keith became a massive coke freak who burnt himself out and died in 1980, aged 32. Even so, they played an integral part in the next batch of studio albums that ran from *Europe '72* to *Wake Of The Flood*, *From The Mars Hotel*, *Blues For Allah*, *Terrapin Station* and *Shakedown Street*, which gave the lie to the notion that the Dead couldn't cut it in the studio.

After a brief hiatus after their second Alexandra Palace dates in 1974 and so-called farewell shows at the Fillmore West and Winterland in San Francisco, documented on the critically slaughtered *Steal Your Face* double live set, the Dead took stock.

"Going our separate way for a while saved us," says Weir in *Long Strange Trip*. "I altered my lifestyle somewhat because I figured I wouldn't live much longer if I spent another six months on the road."

Garcia didn't stop playing, and formed his own band, while Weir joined the Bay Area group Kingfish. Lesh, Garcia and Hart contributed to Ned Lagin's well-received electronic album *Seastones*. Hart explored his own obsessions with the Diga Rhythm Band.

In 1978 the Dead played in front of the Great Pyramid in Cairo. I met them there and interviewed them, including one memorable chat with Garcia while he was sitting on the Sphinx.

> **"I never kept time because we wanted it to go so far out that you don't know what the song is."**
> **Bill Kreutzmann**

The Egypt trip was probably the last Acid Test. Kesey and Quicksilver bassist David Freiberg were in the audience, as was Owsley's psychedelic libation, served to us via dropper bottles while the Dead played during a total eclipse of the moon.

To celebrate the event, promoter Bill Graham threw a party in the Sahara Desert (bring your own camel) and basketball legend Bill Walton scaled the Great Pyramid Of Giza and planted a Skull Fuck Dead flag on the highest point. It was beyond strange, since the Dead's sound system was isolated through the pyramid's King's Chamber, while the Egyptian authorities turned a blind eye.

By 1980 the Dead's audiences were as much part of the story as the band themselves. The Dead Heads had been around ever since Hank Harrison (father

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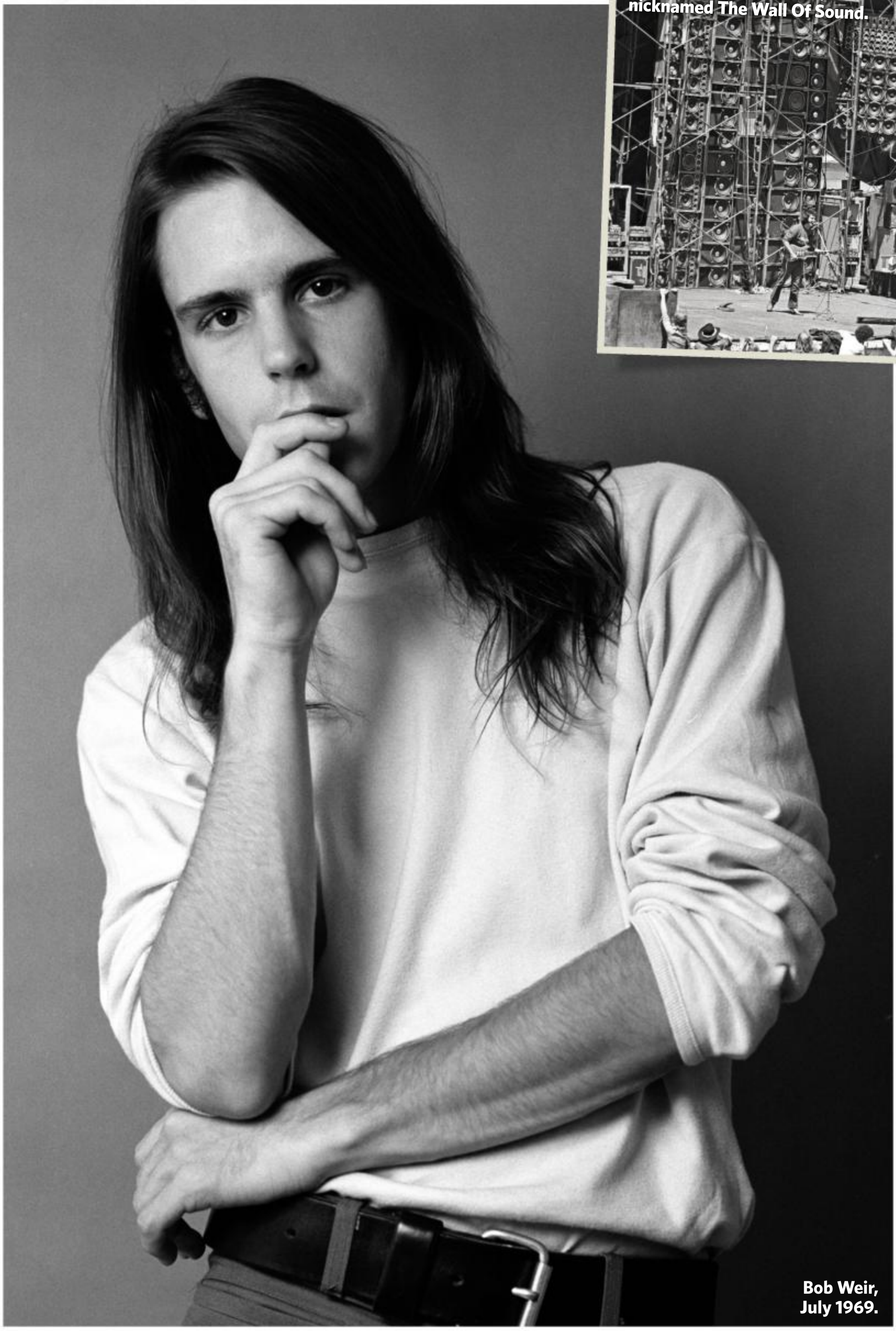
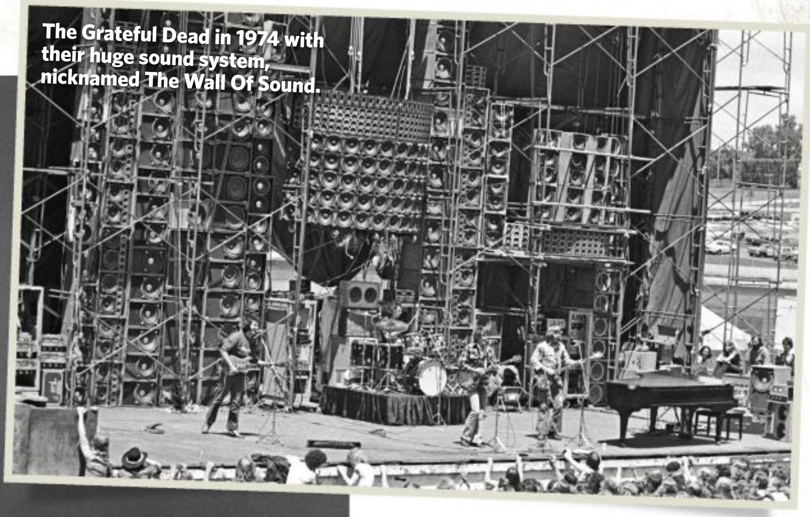


Bob Weir, July 1969.



The Grateful Dead in 1974 with their huge sound system, nicknamed The Wall Of Sound.

MAIN: BARON WOLMAN/ATLASICONS.COM; INSET: GETTY

"We didn't change the world, but we were doing stuff that mattered, and we knew it."

Bob Weir

of Courtney Love) coined the phrase on the 1971 double live album *Skull And Roses*: 'DEAD FREAKS UNITE: Who are you? Where are you? How are you? Send us your name and address and we'll keep you informed. Dead Heads, P.O. Box 1065, San Rafael, California 94901.'

A decade on, the Heads settled into their own 'zones', with sanctioned bootleg tapers setting up camp like bird watchers. To Garcia, the Dead represented a chance for these latter-day pioneers to hop the metaphorical railroad, as his own hero Jack Kerouac had done.

"It's all about getting your war stories, and America has become so lame. We let the tapers carry on because we'd either be cops or let 'em in, and we didn't want to be cops. It was fine by me."

"It was just easier," Weir said. "We gave the music away and made money on the tickets instead."

In any case, it didn't kill the band – in fact it tripled their audience. Ignored by the mainstream, the Dead just grew huger and richer.

The 80s began with new keyboard player Brent Mydland replacing Keith and Donna Godchaux, and the release of the patchy *Go To Heaven* album, whose cover made the group look like ageing New Romantics. Kreutzmann said: "If you go back and listen to it, you'll find it plays better now than it did back then. That's still no excuse for the cover, though – all six of us dressed all in white disco suits, against a white background."

He was only half-right.

Garcia seemed disillusioned with his iconic status. He was smoking a lot of heroin. In July 1986 he suffered a diabetic coma that practically killed him. In recovery he could barely walk and had forgotten how to play the guitar. His friend and fellow musician Merl Saunders remarked: "It sometimes took an hour or two for him to get even a simple chord down. Then, as we got further into it, some things started to come back to him a little, but it took a lot of work."

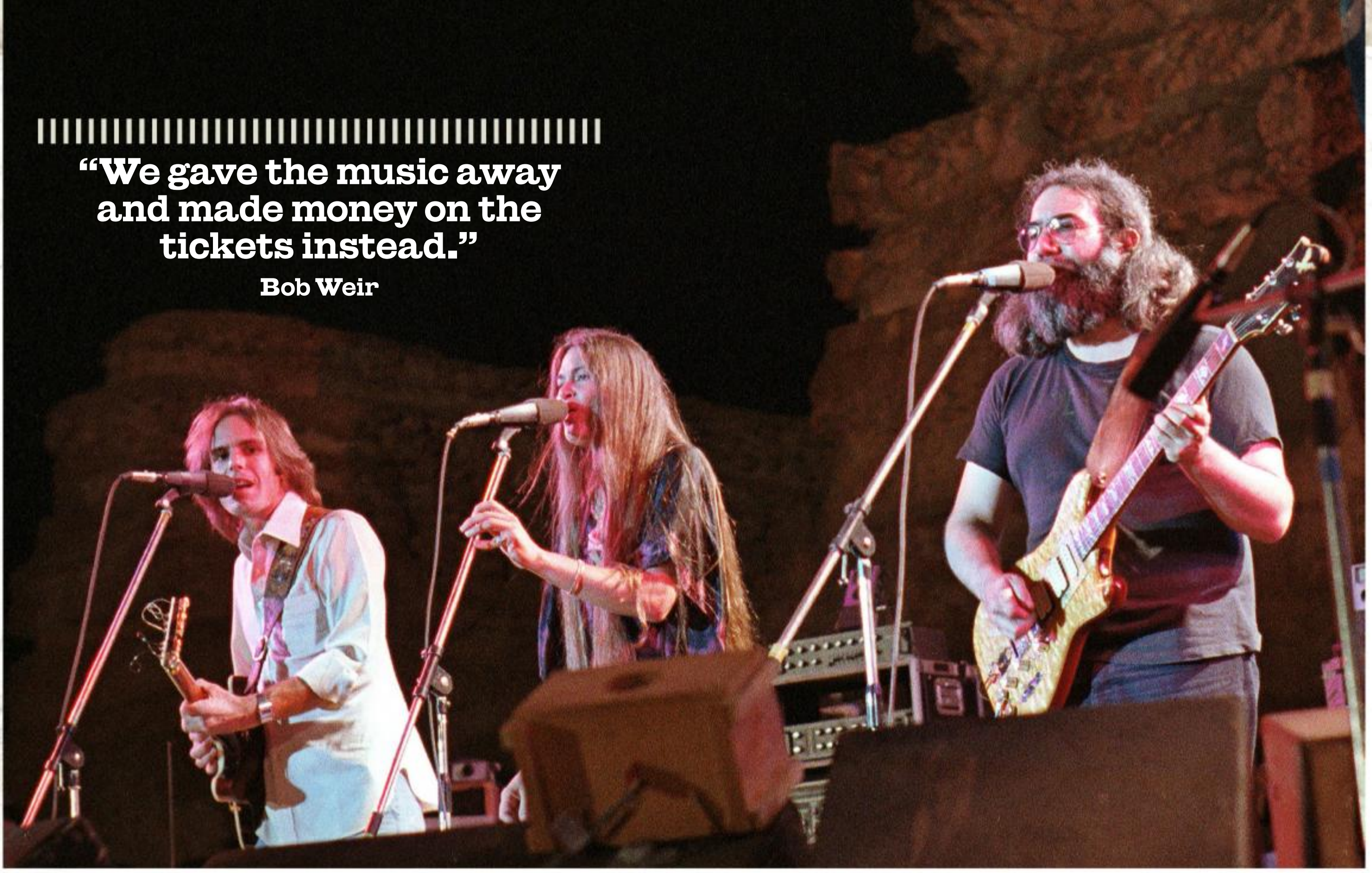
The arrival of a new lyric from Hunter called *Touch Of Grey* helped the revival. The song became their anthem and a Top 10 hit, while the album *In The Dark* went platinum. *Touch Of Grey*'s fist-pumping chorus *'I will survive, I will get by'* helped rescue a lost cause, and the Dead now made it on to prime-time chat show slots with Garcia and Weir on charm offensive. Hey, they weren't so scary. More cuddly counterculture.

But the song was a blessing and a curse. As audiences doubled in size, events beyond their control turned nasty, with riots and even a death during their 1988 tour. Garcia maintained his ambivalence in the face of this rabid hero worship. "I felt it could be pernicious – I was aware of the power," he says in *Long Strange Trip*. "If I thought about controlling it, it would be perilously close to fascism. I don't want to be a king or a president."

In July 1990, I covered the Dead in America. Garcia's body had ballooned, but his playing could still be mercurial. Before the shows, he lay on a slab like an ▷

“We gave the music away and made money on the tickets instead.”

Bob Weir



Egyptian mummy. Occasionally a member of the crew would peek through the dark curtains of his tomb to check that he was still breathing.

Still, he was lucid. We had dinner – “You choose the wine, you’re a sophisticated European” – and I sat in his room while he played endless scales on his beloved banjo. He swam a lot and waxed lyrical about his keep-fit regime and scuba diving.

In October 1990 the Dead made their last visit to Europe and played at Wembley Arena in time for Halloween. After the shows, Garcia sat in his Knightsbridge hotel while a rock-star dealer provided freebase coke and near-pure pink Persian smack speedballs, the very same combo that had killed keyboard player Brent Mydland three months earlier.

Clearly exhausted by touring, Garcia felt an obligation to carry on. So many mouths to feed. The Dead rallied round him, but apart from the odd rehab he didn’t stop. His daughter Trixie watched his slow demise. “He played his scales all night watching *The Twilight Zone* and his favourite corny old horror B-movies. I wish he would have gotten some fucking rest.”

“I’m not afraid of death, and anyway, they always love it when I don’t die,” Garcia chuckled.

In the mid-90s, the Dead were just about the most popular and powerful live draw on the planet. They were being loved to death, and the moving circus that surrounded them was uncontrollable.

Long-time Dead lyricist John Barlow saw the dilemma. “The whole point was we didn’t tell people anything,” he says. “Garcia’s stance was: ‘We are not the government, and if people take drugs, that’s a personal issue. They have the right to do what they want.’”

He certainly did. The band played their final tour with Garcia in 1995, when Weir said that “Jerry couldn’t move or go out and it drove him nuts”.

Forced into seclusion, he took more heroin. “We all thought we could help him – he wouldn’t stop,” says Lesh, who attended many a band ultimatum.

“His heroin abuse made him testy, but the show had to go on,” said Cutler.

There was a half-hearted effort to make an album. The previous record, *Built To Last*, was commercially successful and artistically moribund.

New sessions began in 1992, but Garcia lacked the impetus to finish them off. At his final show with the Dead, at Soldier Field in Chicago on July 9, 1995, one observer noted: “He seemed distracted much of the time. Aside from the moments when he was in the zone and losing himself in the music, Jerry looked like he really just wanted to go home and forget all this.”

Garcia’s death – in his sleep, on August 9, 1995, at a rehabilitation clinic in Forest Knolls, California – occurred a week after he turned 53. He’d given up heroin and become vegetarian, but it was too little too late. As Weir said: “He was pressing a bit harder, I think, than his body could keep up with.”

In *Long Strange Trip*, Hart says just “He killed himself.” Cutler says “he was suffering,” Barlow that “he’d had enough”.

Fans were stunned. They flocked to Golden Gate Park in San Francisco and held vigils. Garcia’s death resonated like John Lennon’s. *Rolling Stone* published a memorial issue, and *In The Dark* went double platinum.

Garcia might not have approved. “I’d rather have my immortality here while I’m alive,” he said in 1993. “I don’t care if it lasts beyond me at all. I’d just as soon it didn’t.”

Above: The Grateful Dead performing at the Great Pyramid in Egypt on September 15, 1978.

His ashes were thrown into the Ganges and the San Francisco Bay.

Today the 69-year-old Weir still takes a group called Dead & Company on the road, with Kreutzmann and Hart joined by guitarist John Mayer. Dead releases continue to flow: their remastered ’67 debut, a classic set from Cornell University in ’77 and the *Long Strange Trip* soundtrack are recent examples. There’s plenty for Weir to get stuck into.

“I still feel Garcia’s presence on stage so, weirdly, I don’t miss him then,” he says. “Later I do miss the amusement, the shared comedy and the music. Personally I don’t mind ageing, because experience is wonderful. I feel young enough and I’m not going to retire.”

Dead & Company stick to the old two-set template, but they don’t hit the three-hour mark any more.

“The overall arc is what Jerry and I developed together over forty years,” Weir continues. “We were fairly predictable. The first set begins and ends with something anthemic or mildly huge, and then we venture off. It’s paced like an opera, with the big aria and the denouement. Trial and error, really, but it worked for us.”

He doesn’t pay much attention to the constant reissue programme, either.

“That era, the Summer Of Love, means an accumulation of things. It was exciting but also a bit disappointing because 1966 was really the Summer Of Love. There was the impetus and we were fresh and facing a world of possibilities. All the things the press talked about, we’d already explored. They’d happened ,and then people descended and it was too late.

“People came to the Bay Area to participate, but an awful lot of riffraff

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Fare Thee Well, A Tribute To The Grateful Dead, Chicago, Illinois, July 2015.

John Mayer (left) and Bob Weir perform with Dead & Company in 2017.

came to join the party. In sixty-six, Haight-Ashbury was a youth ghetto of students, artists and free-thinking folks. It was an authentic community. By sixty-seven it became alien once every loose nut and bolt rattled to the coast. There was the hippie scene, but when the hard drugs arrived so did the crime."

Weir, now whiskery and sage-like, was the poster boy for the Dead. Women loved him and he loved them back. "I pretty much thought I was a hippie, or that we were a lot hipper than the society making war with another country [Vietnam] they didn't even understand," he reflects. "Looking back, I feel I had a wonderful and amazing job. I was laughing for joy. We were making a pretty good living, and beyond that the possibilities were enormous. We didn't get to all the places we wanted to and we didn't change the world, but we were doing stuff that mattered, and we knew it."

Weir compares that era to "the years before and after the American Revolution and the drafting of the constitution: the assembling of a brand new culture built entirely on idealism. We did have roots. The songs we grew up on came from a tradition with history – Scottish ballads, medieval folk, they morphed in. When I sing that type of song, I really find the voice of those folks. The scenery is different. I don't want to sound visionary, but there are moments when I feel like I'm back in time and everything changes colour. It's another world."

Recently he completed his third solo album, *Blue Mountain*, with lyricist Josh Ritter, cowboy songs inspired by Weir's time as a ranch hand. "When I was fifteen I ran away to be a cowboy. I found myself working in Wyoming, living in a bunkhouse with a bunch of old cowpokes and ranch hands, and a lot of those guys had grown up in an era before

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"I still feel Garcia's presence on stage so, weirdly, I don't miss him then."

Bob Weir

radio had even got to Wyoming. Their idea of an evening was to tell stories and sing songs. I was the kid with the guitar. I was the accompaniment. I learned a bunch of those songs and got steeped in that tradition. It's a tradition that's almost gone."

It's possible this may be the last Dead-related studio album. They were never that keen on the recording process.

"Our problem was we played too loud because of our live experiences. The notion was we should make better, more acceptable records, so we entrusted producers. And it didn't always work."

Perhaps the most frustrating Dead album is 1978's *Shakedown Street*, which Little Feat's Lowell George began producing but didn't finish. "He did as good a job as anyone, but there was far

too much chemical adventure and far too much drinking: Peruvian marching powder and brandy. It certainly wasn't good for Lowell, cos the cocaine turned his heart off and that was that. He had a lot of anxiety problems. He was very nervous around the Dead and he had to flush a lot of demons out just to keep in check."

So how does Bob Weir sum up the Grateful Dead now?

"Jerry had a role. I had a role. Mine was to pull everything together and focus to a point where Garcia could dance with it. I was the glue. And that's a great job to have because when it works, the band sits up and begs."

As for the future, who knows? Phil Lesh is still out on the road, despite having suffered two bouts of cancer. Weir will join him in August.

"I guess while we can still crawl out there, we will. The music won't stop until we do. It's a case of last man standing."

Long Strange Trip: The Untold Story Of The Grateful Dead is available via Amazon. Stream now on Prime Video.

ALL JOIN TOGETHER

From a world record-breaking festival in the 70s to today's thriving scene (in the US, anyway), we take a look at the under-the-radar innovative improvisers of the jam-band community.

Words: **Rob Hughes**

Granted, Woodstock was big – but not *this* big. This was a gathering of tribes like no other. On July 28, 1973 an estimated crowd of 600,000 assembled at the Watkins Glen Raceway in upstate New York for a one-day music festival. Traffic jams tailed back for miles. Some people abandoned their cars on the grass verges, left under a baking sun, and walked the rest of the way. Many were so far back from the stage that they couldn't see it at all, and could barely hear the sound pumped out to them via 16 delay towers, cranking out 24,000 watts of power.

As *The Guinness Book Of Records* later confirmed, it was the largest audience for a pop festival in history. To give that attendance figure some perspective, roughly one in every 350 people in the whole of America were present. Those figures are all the more remarkable when you take into account that they'd come to see just three acts: the Allman Brothers Band, the Grateful Dead and The Band.

The Summer Jam At Watkins Glen was the culmination of a relatively new phenomenon in rock: the jam scene. Over the course of six or seven years prior to the event, a number of bands had moved away from the rigid structures of commercial pop and begun exploring music that took its cues from free-form jazz and improvisation. Three-minute songs with neat verses and catchy choruses were out; anything-goes jams were in.

"You can't plan an adventure, or it ceases to be one."
Phish's Trey Anastasio

Leading the pack were the Grateful Dead and the Allman Brothers Band.

At the Summer Jam, the Dead played two mammoth sets that pushed the five-hour mark. Refusing to be cowed by a near-biblical thunderstorm that turned the site into a muddy bog, The Band performed for two hours. The Allmans, teeing up their soon-to-be-released *Brothers And Sisters* album, played for three. The climax was a 90-minute set featuring members of all three groups extemporising their way through *Mountain Jam* and a couple of deconstructed rock'n'roll staples: *Not Fade Away* and *Johnny B. Goode*.

It didn't matter so much that the encore was sloppy (according to Allmans

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The 1973 Summer Jam at Watkins Glen: a jam-packed jam-band fest.

Above: (l-r) John Popper of Blues Traveler; the Allman Brothers in 1971; the Dave Matthews Band.

BLUES TRAVELER: REX; THE ALLMAN BROTHERS: ALAMY; DAVE MATTHEWS BAND: GETTY

drummer Butch Trucks, a combination of booze, acid and cocaine had taken its toll), it was the communal experience that mattered. The multitudes had come to the Summer Jam to hang out, get high and make some noise. As an illustration of the symbiotic relationship that had grown between the fans and their idols, the bands simply affirmed the notion that they'd come to the right spot.

"The Dead is just the place where the party happens," Trucks told interviewer Jim Clash in 2016. "And they're the beneficiaries of that. I guess that's what we did for three or four years too."

You can trace the origins of jamming back to pre-war jazz. As early as 1937, Coleman Hawkins formed his All Star Jam Band as a means to explore spontaneous arrangements on a theme. New York City then became a crucible of after-hours jamming during the 1940s and early 50s, with Minton's Playhouse hosting jazz greats Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Lester Young and others. But it wasn't until the mid-to-late 60s that the idea took hold in rock music.

In 1965 The Warlocks (prior to becoming the Grateful Dead), high on LSD and dope, were playing clubs around San Francisco. These performances were loud, occasionally shambolic and mostly formless, taking songs such as Wilson Pickett's hit *In The Midnight Hour* and stretching them into 45-minute jams. The idea, borrowed from John Coltrane, was to improvise over a tonic chord and see where it took them. As Grateful Dead guitarist Bob Weir noted: "We were a bar band with abnormal features."

Before long the Grateful Dead were the house band at Ken Kesey's Acid Tests, playing all night under coloured lights and strobes while thousands of tripping freaks did their thing around them. This was the ideal environment to experiment with volume and sound, and it brought with it a subculture of followers who would come to be known as Deadheads.

The Dead weren't alone, of course. Rock music was expanding its vocabulary at an accelerated rate. The Velvet Underground were transmuting pop into avant-garde drones that relied heavily on ▷

improvisation. Pink Floyd made interstellar soundscapes from the fractured remains of R&B. The Jimi Hendrix Experience turned old-school rock'n'roll into blazing psychedelia. Cream began stripping the blues to its core and riffing on a theme until it took flight.

Cream were indebted to Bill Graham for this change in approach, after the US promoter booked them for a lengthy residency at the Fillmore West in San Francisco in August 1967, giving them licence to play whatever they liked for as long as they liked. The power trio duly started dispensing 20-minute jams that showcased each of their virtuosic talents.

"We'd go off in our own directions, then hit these coincidental points in the music when we would all arrive at the same conclusion," Eric Clapton recalled in his autobiography. "I'd never experienced anything like it. It had nothing to do with lyrics or ideas; it was much deeper, purely musical. We were at our peak during that period."

Cream's exploits didn't go unnoticed by the Dead, whose chemist, Owsley Stanley, kept them supplied with hits of acid during their stay in San Francisco. Nor did they fail to register with the Allman Brothers Band, who formed in Jacksonville, Florida two years later. "Cream opened the door to what we did," Butch Trucks reflected. "They were the first band to really get into improvisation. They were an absolute necessity to what came later."

The Allmans took idiomatic southern traditions – soul, blues, jazz, gospel, rock'n'roll – and racked them out into inquisitive jams held together by fearsome musicianship. Their crowning glory was 1971's classic live album *At Fillmore East*. Across four sides of vinyl, the band offer a telepathic fusion of styles, led by slide guitarist Duane Allman, with younger brother Gregg on organ and vocals. The set peaks with a 19-minute version of Willie Cobbs's *You Don't Love Me* and the epic intensity of Gregg's *Whipping Post*.

As the 80s unfolded, jam bands were no longer in fashion. The Grateful Dead were the major exception, continuing to pull in huge crowds across the States, despite their powers being somewhat diminished by leader Jerry Garcia's ill health (largely the result of decades of drug abuse).

Deadheads turned up in their droves, buoyed by a surprise hit single (1987's *Touch Of Grey*) and a culture of bootlegging that was actively encouraged by the band. Fans with recording gear were allotted their own section at gigs. Afterwards they'd trade tapes with other collectors, creating a vast, bespoke archive of live performances in which no Grateful Dead songs were ever played the same way twice.

This community-driven approach to fandom was adopted by a new breed of jam bands who cropped up in the 80s – Phish, Blues Traveler, Widespread Panic and Aquarium Rescue Unit among them. The latter were guided by veteran guitarist Bruce Hampton, a contemporary of the Dead and the Allmans during his time with the Hampton Grease Band in the late 60s.

"Cream were the first band to really get into improvisation. They were a necessity to what came later."
Derek Trucks

Above: John Bell of Widespread Panic. Top right: Cream.

Phish, in particular, tapped into the lineage of the jam scene by covering Grateful Dead songs in their sets and accruing a huge group of disciples who called themselves Phans. Phish's inauguration of their own series of music festivals eventually circled back to Watkins Glen, where in 2011 they hosted Superball IX, a three-day shebang on the same site as the famous Summer Jam of '73.

The 90s brought along more bands partial to a jam (Dave Matthews Band, anyone?). But the movement's popularity was spiked by a travelling festival instigated by John Popper of Blues Traveler. The somewhat clumsily titled Horizons Of Rock Developing East Coast (H.O.R.D.E. for short) took Blues Traveler, Widespread Panic, The Samples, the Spin Doctors, the Aquarium Rescue Unit and Phish on a summer tour of US amphitheatres in 1992.

As the festival scene gathered momentum, there were other key arrivals, none more so than Gov't Mule. Formed by guitarist Warren Haynes and bass player Allen Woody, both of whom had history with the re-formed Allman Brothers Band, Gov't Mule took improvised groove-rock to fresh new heights.

Even Garcia's death, in August 1995, didn't signal the end of the Grateful Dead. As Phish took on their mantle as America's premier draw on the jam scene, Garcia's old bandmates splintered into outfits such as the Other Ones, The Dead, Furthur, Phil Lesh & Friends, RatDog and the Rhythm Devils.

The advent of the Bonnaroo Music Festival in 2002, held on a 700-acre farm in Manchester, Tennessee, put a lasting seal of approval on the jam-band revival. Pulling in close to 100,000 punters, this multi-band showcase began as a conduit for the most prominent groups of the genre – Phish, Widespread Panic, the String Cheese Incident, Gov't Mule, Umphrey's McGee, plus the Allman Brothers and The Dead – before becoming a catch-all festival to rival Glastonbury.

As the jam scene continues to thrive, its governing principle is summed up by Trey Anastasio, singer/guitarist with Phish: "We want to have a spontaneous adventure," he once explained. "You can't plan an adventure, or it ceases to be one." ●

WIDESPREAD PANIC: GETTY

LOST MAESTRO

DEREK TRUCKS

The mild-mannered guitarist might just be improvisation's best-kept secret currently on the jam-band circuit. "I guess it could be scary," he reveals, "but you've got to enjoy the tightrope walk."

Words: **Henry Yates**

According to the Louisiana slide-guitar maestro Sonny Landreth, it took all of five seconds to identify Derek Trucks as the great white hope of the jam-band scene.

"I first heard Derek when he was a kid," Landreth told this writer. "I saw this clip on the news, this little kid playing slide. With everything being so accessible on the internet, it's chops galore, so here's another cute kid playing guitar. But it was a whole different thing with him, right from the get-go. I remember me and my bass player, Dave Ranson, we looked at each other and said: 'Yep, that kid's got it. That's an old soul there.'"

Nature and nurture were both on Trucks's side. Born 38 years ago in Jacksonville, Florida, being the nephew of Allman Brothers Band drummer Butch Trucks, there was a certain inevitability to the guitarist's early path.

When he was nine years old, Derek bought his first guitar, a five-dollar acoustic, from a garage sale, and took up slide after hearing Duane Allman's freewheeling playing on the Allmans' live classic *At Fillmore East*. Young Derek soon showed a technical mastery that astonished even the jam-band royalty in whose orbit he moved, as well as a militant rejection of live music that was too easy, too neat, too glib.

"I feel like a lot of artists, guitar players, musicians, whatever, they try to find this formula," he once noted. "You know, the buttons you can push to make a crowd react, the easy hits, the things that work, that are kinda a no-brainer."

By the late 90s, Trucks was making a mark, both in his own Grammy-winning solo band and in sideman roles for the Allmans and, later, Eric Clapton. In each context, Butch Trucks noted a curious phenomenon: his nephew never played the same thing twice.

"I guess that could be scary," says Derek, "but my heroes played that way. You're always trying to find new things. You enjoy the tightrope walk. The beauty for us is that it's not like actual tightrope walking, where if you fall you're gonna die. As long as you're okay with mild embarrassment, you'll get by. And oftentimes the things that come right after a slip are the most brilliant, because the musical adrenaline kicks in and you go to your best shit."

"Oftentimes the things that come right after a slip are the most brilliant."
Derek Trucks

In recent times, Trucks has focused on the Tedeschi Trucks Band, which he and his wife, vocalist Susan Tedeschi, have fronted since 2010. Each of the 11-piece collective's studio albums is worthy of investigation, in particular 2013's *Made Up Mind,* but the truest snapshot of their ethos comes on the stage, where the line-up thrillingly stretch the material to the limit of musical elasticity.

"On a great night, it's effortless," Trucks told *The Blues Magazine*. "I mean, for me, growing up around the Allman Brothers scene, that's the way it was – you always push it and you always take chances. Because of that, there's gonna be some nights that are messier than others, but it makes the great ones that much more special."

Above: Derek Trucks. Inset: the scene's leading lights – Trucks, Gregg Allman and Warren Haynes.

GETTY x2

CHRIS ROBINSON BROTHERHOOD

Freed from the constraints of the Black Crowes and record company pressure, Chris Robinson is finally living the dream with his new-found, laid-back band of brothers.

Words: **Rob Hughes**

"I have a lot of stories to tell and we're having so much fun," declares Chris Robinson. "If this band is our garden, all we have to do is tend the vegetables – we don't have to deal with any showbiz trips or ego trips. This is where we live and we're a family. And we built this little caravan that goes around and lays out the vibes."

Singer/guitarist Robinson is clearly a happy man these days. Formerly the frontman of southern rockers the Black Crowes, alongside guitarist brother Rich, he now heads up California's Chris Robinson Brotherhood. It's a joyous, jam-oriented band of seasoned players – guitarist Neal Casal, drummer Tony Leone, bassist Jeff Hill and ex-Crowes keyboard player Adam MacDougall – where country, soul, funk and roots rock coalesce under a vast canopy of blissful psychedelia.

With CRB, nothing is off limits. Which probably goes some way to explaining why they're so prolific. Since the summer of 2012, the Brotherhood have released five studio albums, a mini-LP and three hefty volumes of live recordings. They've also racked up hundreds of gigs and curated their own annual festival.

Not burdened by nostalgia, hit singles or the demands of a major label (everything is issued through Robinson's own Silver Arrow imprint), the five-piece exist outside normal industry protocol. And, as befits what they call their farm-to-table aesthetic, they've gathered around them a large group of like-minded devotees.

The creative hub of this autonomous micro-empire is the Brotherhood Arts Lab, a studio space fixed to a mountain overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Robinson has even given it a suitably mystical name.

"The origin of our little absurdist community relates to the fact that we heavily identified with California being the backdrop to this music," he explains. "So I thought we needed to invent a place in our minds, which was Unicorn, California. The Brotherhood Arts Lab is kinda like wherever we were at any time. In this case we have this small cottage industry going, where we're allowed to make these recordings, find this space where we can all get together, keep out the reality of the regular world and really express ourselves in a dynamic, energetic way.

"The cool thing about the real Brotherhood Arts Lab, where we've made our last two records, is that it *is* a magical place. There's something about the view and the vibes. It's all about keeping something flowing. We're free to do whatever we want, which was always my ultimate dream."

Robinson knows this sounds like a throwback to some Aquarian idea of a hippie idyll. But essentially that's what it is, made real. Having been a part of one of the

"We're free to do whatever we want, which was always my ultimate dream."
Chris Robinson

Above: CRB. Top right: Robinson at the SummerStage Benefit Concert in New York, 2017.

biggest American rock bands of the past 30 years, he's also perfectly placed when it comes to judging where he needs to be.

"The Black Crowes was more regimented to what other people expected from the songs," he says of the group that sold 35 million albums before splitting for good in 2015. "So since we hatched this cosmic egg that is the CRB, I've never told anyone what to play. Everyone just picks up and starts doing their thing. I'm in a band with people who are all attuned to the same wavelength. We invented this music on the fly, which gives it wings. We live on the bus together, we're out doing around a hundred and twenty shows a year, we produce our own records and we've never had an argument."

This year shows no let-up in the Brotherhood's work rate. Not only are they touring across the US until mid-December, but they've also just unveiled the next instalment of their *Betty's Blends* live series (recorded and mixed by Grateful Dead archivist Betty Cantor-Jackson) and have completed a new studio album.

Barefoot In The Head continues their purple patch, offering a radiant vision of Americana that manages to salute the past while beating fresh paths into the future.

"I tend to write these folky sort of songs, rudimentary things, really," says Robinson. "But our thing has always been: 'What if Buck Owens's band had Tim Blake and some Gong in it? Or what about Waylon Jennings and *Mwandishi*-era Herbie Hancock jamming together?'"

Robinson admits that he could never have made music like this with his former band. "The Black Crowes was an experience that *happened* to me," he reflects. "You work hard, write songs, get a deal, put your money in the slot – kerr-ching! It came up cherries! And I'm not knocking it. But the CRB is something that we *built*, and I really enjoy the scale of it. We have the luxury of not being anybody's good-time summer radio hit, so even though we're in our fifties, it's still something that's kind of underground.

"A lot of people told me I couldn't do this. But the whole point was that it's brick by brick with us. Our shows and songs are still a part of the living mythology that's happening now." ●

CHRIS ROBINSON LIVE: GETTY; PHISH: BRANTLEY GUTIERREZ/PRESS

Top right: Phish (l-r) Page McConnell, Jon Fishman, Trey Anastasio, Mike Gordon.

LOST AT SEA

PHISH

Solo festivals, seven-hour-plus sets and fanatical followers: meet the world's biggest jam band.

Words: **Rob Hughes**

The phenomenal success of Phish is one of the more curious tales in rock. Often ignored or derided by swathes of the US music press, utterly invisible in the UK, the quartet nevertheless boast an army of fans, swapping live recordings and shoring up a vast online community. Phish gross an average of $1.5 million a night and are so big that they host enormous multi-day festivals with only themselves on the bill.

The first of these took place in August 1996, when 70,000 'Phans' flocked to an old air force base in Plattsburgh, New York. Apart from carnival rides, flight displays and circus acts, the audience enjoyed seven sets of Phish music over two nights. Other festivals arrived soon after, pulling in similar numbers.

The peak came at the end of December 1999, when Phish organised Big Cypress on an Indian reservation in Florida. One of their five sets lasted seven-and-a-half hours – catnip to the 85,000 in attendance. It was the largest Millennium Eve gig on the planet, leaving Barbra Streisand, Elton John, the Eagles and Kiss in their dust.

"The festivals grew organically out of our early scene in Vermont," singer/guitarist Trey Anastasio told *Rolling Stone* in 2011. "We were always a party band and we used to play outside a lot. People always seemed to show up… We've always had a very tight-knit community."

Formed at the University of Vermont in 1983, Phish are almost impossible to categorise. Early days saw them pepper their sets with Grateful Dead songs, before they began exploring everything from prog to bluegrass, hard rock to calypso, jazz fusion to show tunes. Phish shows could be daffy one minute, deadly the next.

The glue that bonded all these disparate styles together was the band's fondness for improvised jams. The current line-up (completed by bassist Mike Gordon, drummer Jon Fishman and keyboard player Page McConnell, all of whom double as vocalists) have been together for 32 years now, give or take a couple of interruptions in the 00s.

The Grateful Dead comparisons have tailed Phish throughout a career that has now yielded 15 studio albums, most recently last year's *Big Boat*. Indeed, Dead mainman Jerry Garcia's death in 1995 bequeathed the mantle of America's premier jam band to Anastasio and co.

Talking to writer Michael Snyder prior to Garcia's demise, Anastasio suggested that the connection was "an energy thing and a sense of adventure. There's a similarity with the Dead shows because of the risk in improvisation. They do it. We do it. And you never know what's going to happen."

In 2015, this alliance was officially endorsed when Anastasio stood in for Garcia at the Dead's Fare Thee Well 50th-anniversary shows.

Apart from the above influence, Anastasio's formative years saw him absorbing the sounds of Jimi Hendrix, Pat Metheny, King Crimson and Stanley Jordan. For him, ultimately, improvisation is both a liberation and sanctuary.

"Music has always been my protection against the world, from a very young age," he says. "I feel safe inside of a jam." ●

LOST IN A JAM

GOV'T MULE

Blending blues, soul, gospel, jazz, country and rock'n'roll into tasty jams comes naturally to Mule mainman Warren Haynes, as he explains to *Classic Rock*.

Words: **Rob Hughes**

There's no one better qualified to talk about jam bands than Warren Haynes. Not only has he served as Gov't Mule's frontman and guitarist for the past 23 years, he's also been a member of the Allman Brothers Band for the best part of a decade, and figured in line-ups of The Dead, the post-Jerry Garcia band formed by surviving players from the Grateful Dead. Factor in guest spots on albums by Dave Matthews, Derek Trucks and Blues Traveler and you have the very definition of someone who likes to find gold in musical spontaneity.

"It's all about momentary composition," says Haynes, attempting to explain the timeless appeal of jamming. "For a solo instrumentalist, it's probably the most gratification you can get. Composing can often be very time-consuming, but when you're improvising, it's all on the fly – there's no second chance. At the same time, there needs to be a balance between actual songwriting and improvisation. One without the other falls a little short."

Gov't Mule have just released *Revolution Come… Revolution Go*, an album that plays loud and loose with southern rock, heavy blues, countrified soul and free jazz. "It was the first studio record we've done since we took a break [after 2013's *Shout!*] and since we celebrated our twentieth anniversary," Haynes explains. "So I think a lot of the passion from our end comes from embarking on a new chapter. We never thought we'd make a second record, much less a tenth, which is what this one is."

As the title implies, it's also Gov't Mule's most politically pointed album to date. Sessions began last November in Austin, Texas on the same day that the American public cast their votes in the presidential election. That charged atmosphere found its way into the title track, the seething *Stone Cold Rage* and *Pressure Under Fire*. The latter is a strident call for unity in divisive times. *'We all know how this ends,'* Haynes belts out. *'So many times, so many places, by now you'd think we'd have learned, from any one of those times, that it blew up in our faces/ How many times can we be burned?'*

"Going back to our first record, there have always been political statements on pretty much every Gov't Mule album," he says. "Though there's perhaps a little more on this one. Or maybe people are just more aware and paying attention now because of the volatile times we live in."

To classify *Revolution Come… Revolution Go* as a purely political album, however, would be wrong. For all the biting polemic, it's ultimately about the vicissitudes of a life well lived, with all its attendant triumphs, regrets and reflection. Its many moods are mirrored by the journeying nature of the music therein, allowing plenty of space for spontaneous manoeuvre.

Haynes's long-time co-producer Gordie Johnson had a hand in half of the album's 12 tracks, as well as adding a little steel guitar. Meanwhile, the revered Don Was oversaw *Dreams & Songs* and the aforementioned *Pressure Under Fire*. Other guests include ex-Fabulous Thunderbirds guitar great Jimmie Vaughan, elder brother of the late Stevie Ray.

> **"There needs to be a balance between actual songwriting and improvisation."**
> **Warren Haynes**

"The three centrepieces for me are *Thorns Of Life*, *Revolution Come, Revolution Go* and *Dark Was The Night, Cold Was The Ground*," Haynes says. "Those songs utilise more improvisation than the others. But even some of the more structured ones, like *Stone Cold Rage* or *Drawn That Way*, are very much improvised. We don't really prefer to structure things out as far as the instrumental sections of the solos – we usually choose a performance based on the conversational aspect of it. If the band is hitting on all cylinders and everybody's having a real musical conversation, that's more rewarding to me.

"I think we all recognise the strong chemistry that we have musically, and how unique and special that is. And our tastes are similar enough to keep a common thread rolling through the music, but different enough to where there's always some influences popping up from one direction or another that maybe we haven't tackled in the past."

This aspect of Gov't Mule is perhaps best heard on their treatment of *Dark Was The Night, Cold Was The Ground*. First recorded in 1927 by slide-blues legend Blind Willie Johnson, it has been covered many times since. But Haynes has added his own lyrics and transformed it into a hard-rocking, gospel-fired epic.

"The idea behind tackling that song is an extension of the thought process for *John The Revelator*, from our second album [1998's *Dose*]," he explains. "For that one we took the Son House *a cappella* version that I was inspired by and added instrumentation to it. Then you can fast-forward to *By A Thread* [2009], when we did *Railroad Boy*, the 100-year-old folk tune, and turned it into a rock song.

"The treatment of *Dark Was The Night* was kind of staying in tradition with that. I took a lot of the riffs and melodies that Blind Willie Johnson played on the original version, which is an instrumental. There are no chord changes or structure – it's really just a feeling and a mood that's so haunting and beautiful. So I decided I'd only want to do it if we could take it in a different direction. And it kind of grew from the ground floor upwards in the studio."

Elsewhere, Haynes's lifelong passion for soul music burns through the grooves of *The Man I Want To Be* and *Sarah, Surrender*, which has congas, organ riffs and female backing harmonies. "James Brown was my first love and Otis Redding was probably my favourite singer," Haynes says. "I started singing before I ever played guitar. All the music I grew up listening to, before I discovered rock'n'roll, was soul: Otis, Wilson Pickett, Sam & Dave, James Brown.

"Eventually I heard Sly And The Family Stone, and that started building a bridge to rock'n'roll music for me. Then I discovered Cream, Jimi Hendrix and Johnny Winter. That's what made me want to play guitar.

"When I found out what all those guys listened to, it turned out to be Albert King, Son House, Freddie King, BB King, Elmore James and Howlin' Wolf. I learnt >

so much from listening to those blues guys. The only guitar teacher I ever had was a blues guitarist, who told me that if I only ever listened to Albert King and BB King, I'd be studying for the rest of my life. When I finally got my first guitar, in 1972, I'd spend hours listening to those records, trying to figure out what they were playing."

Haynes credits his siblings for encouraging his catholic tastes in music and, by extension, shaping his creative life.

"I was fortunate enough to grow up in a house with two older brothers who had all these amazing records," he recalls. "They would force-feed me this great music and I was exposed to so much different stuff. It just seemed completely natural to like it all. My eldest brother was really into John Coltrane, Miles Davis and Sonny Rollins. It felt like somewhere between the blues and those jazz records was the source of inspiration for rock'n'roll bands who would play long solos. I think it's all connected. The Allman Brothers, who I loved, were listening to Coltrane,

Gov't Mule in 2017: (l-r) Warren Haynes, Matt Abts, Jorgen Carlsson, Danny Louis.

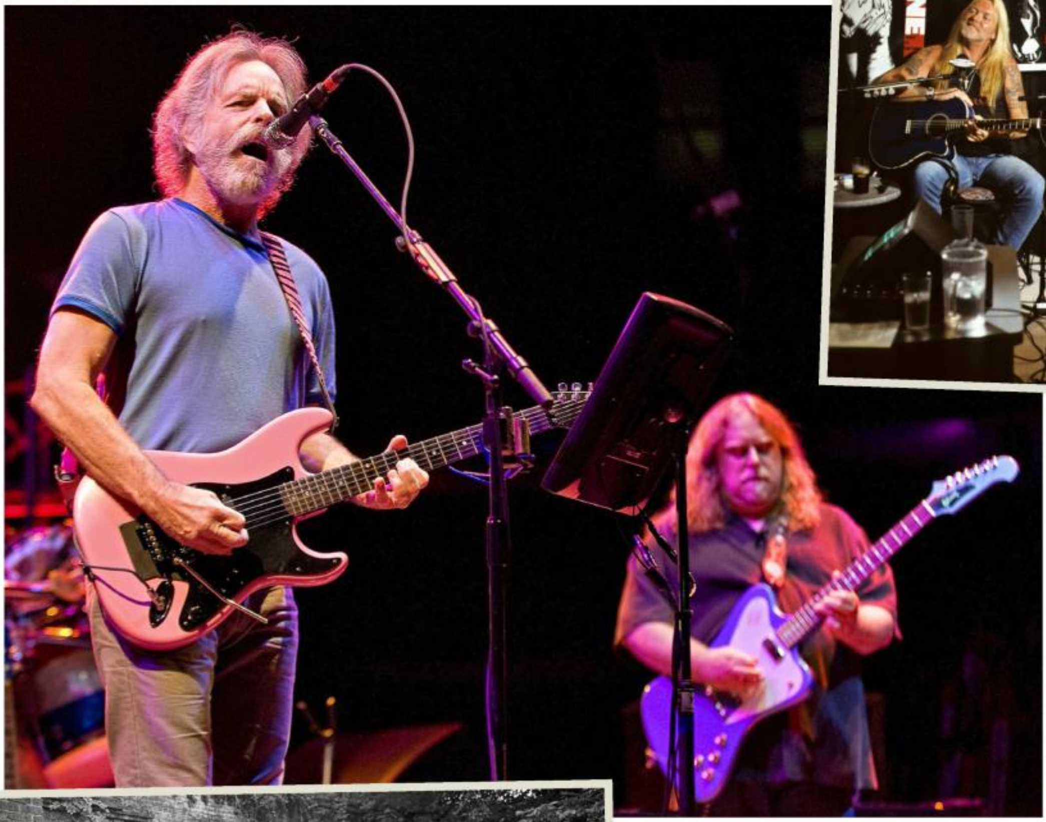
but also Elmore James. I grew up in a time when all the bands were making live records and doing longer interpretations of their own songs. Me and my friends would sit in someone's garage and jam for hours and hours."

The current incarnation of Gov't Mule – Haynes, keyboard player Danny Louis, bassist Jorgen Carlsson and original member Matt Abts on drums – remain true to the spirit in which they were founded in 1994. Back then, pre-Bonnaroo and the Phish festivals, jam bands were still a fairly disparate bunch. Gov't Mule, in fact, was initially conceived as a distraction from Haynes's regular gig with the Allman Brothers, whom he'd joined in 1989 after spending some time in the Dickey Betts Band, and contributing to Gregg Allman's recent solo album *Just Before The Bullets Fly*. He and Allmans bassist Allen Woody used the downtime to dream up a plan. Abts, meanwhile, already knew Haynes from their time together with Dickey Betts.

"The one thing that Woody, myself and Matt shared in the beginning was a love for so many different types of music," Haynes says. "A lot of the British rock bands incorporated that same sort of philosophy, but in America there seemed to be more of a tolerance for bands to just do whatever they felt in the moment. And an important part of all of it was the thread of improvisation that ran through everything, whether it was soul, blues or, in Woody's case, bluegrass. He loved bluegrass, but looked at it the way you do jazz. Being open to that sort of musical communication was something that the three of us had in common and wanted to explore. And we found that there was an audience with a similar mindset.

"When we started, the jam band scene wasn't really fully developed in the States," he continues. "It was starting to happen, but there were definitely no rock bands similar to Gov't Mule. We had some pretty heavy influences. I guess it's kind of a little bold to think you can get away with being influenced by Led Zeppelin, John

JUSTIN BORUCKI/ATLASICONS.COM



Coltrane, Miles Davis and James Brown, all at the same time. But so many of our heroes did that, so to us it wasn't really anything new."

This cross-fertilisation was, of course, entirely natural for Haynes. Music, he maintains, should be a fluid entity that exists without boundaries. That credo is further deepened by time, and one that has survived the absence of Woody, who died suddenly, aged just 44, in August 2000.

"Gov't Mule was partially his vision," Haynes reflects. "It was the two of us that came up with the concept, based on a lot of late-night conversations while listening to our favourite records and realising there was a void in the way that modern bands approached music. We thought it would be good to bring back a lot of those concepts, not just from a performance standpoint but sonically as well. Once I started writing songs with Gov't Mule in mind, it kind of gave me a vehicle to write for. And with each record, that vehicle widened.

"Even when it came to the first three records with Allen, you could see the different influences starting to emerge with each one," he adds. "For example, it was very important to him that our first record [1995's *Gov't Mule*] be almost live in the studio, that *Dose* contained a little more production, and that our third album [2000's *Life Before Insanity*] started to embrace more acoustic instruments.

"From a Gov't Mule perspective, we still look at it in a similar way to what was going on with FM radio in the late sixties and early seventies. You'd have Sly And The Family Stone, Crosby, Stills & Nash, soul, jazz, Latin, all under one umbrella. All these different things were considered rock music. A lot of the overall concept that remains today came from the way that Woody and I looked at music in 1994."

"Me and my friends would sit in the garage and jam for hours and hours."
Warren Haynes

Clockwise from above left: Gov't Mule in 1994; Bob Weir and Warren Haynes live with The Dead in 2009; the Allman Brothers in 1992.

Haynes's first break came at the turn of the 80s when country outlaw David Allan Coe hired him as a guitarist. Haynes says that Coe – a provocative character who once claimed to have killed a man during one of his frequent spells in prison – proved "a challenge. It was a bit bizarre, his reputation preceded him. But it was through him that I met Dickey Betts and Gregg Allman, which eventually led to me being part of the Allman Brothers".

By 1999, during a brief hiatus from the Allmans, Haynes had become part of the extended Grateful Dead family.

"I saw them five times from eighty-nine to when Garcia died in ninety-five, though I did see them once as a nineteen-year-old in seventy-nine," he explains. "So I got a glimpse of what that scene was all about, which was pretty crazy. Then when [Dead bassist] Phil Lesh called me in the late nineties, I flew from New York to California to hang out with him, rehearse and do a few shows. From that point onwards I was part of that scene."

At more than one juncture in the 2000s, Haynes was simultaneously a member of The Dead, the Allmans and Gov't Mule. In the past 29 years he has also presided over the annual Warren Haynes Christmas Jam, a charity event in his home town of Asheville, North Carolina. What began as a low-key gig in a small club has now grown into a mammoth showcase for both new and established artists.

"Christmas Jam started out as an opportunity for a lot of local musicians to get together and play at the one time of year when everybody seemed to be home," he explains. "But it changed after a few years into something more regional, with people like Derek Trucks, Dave Schools from Widespread Panic, Toy Caldwell from the Marshall Tucker Band and Bobby Keyes from the Rolling Stones showing up. It just started getting bigger and bigger. And I guess for twenty years now it's been in an arena. It's an eight-hour show, and it's important to us to have a lot of different types of music represented."

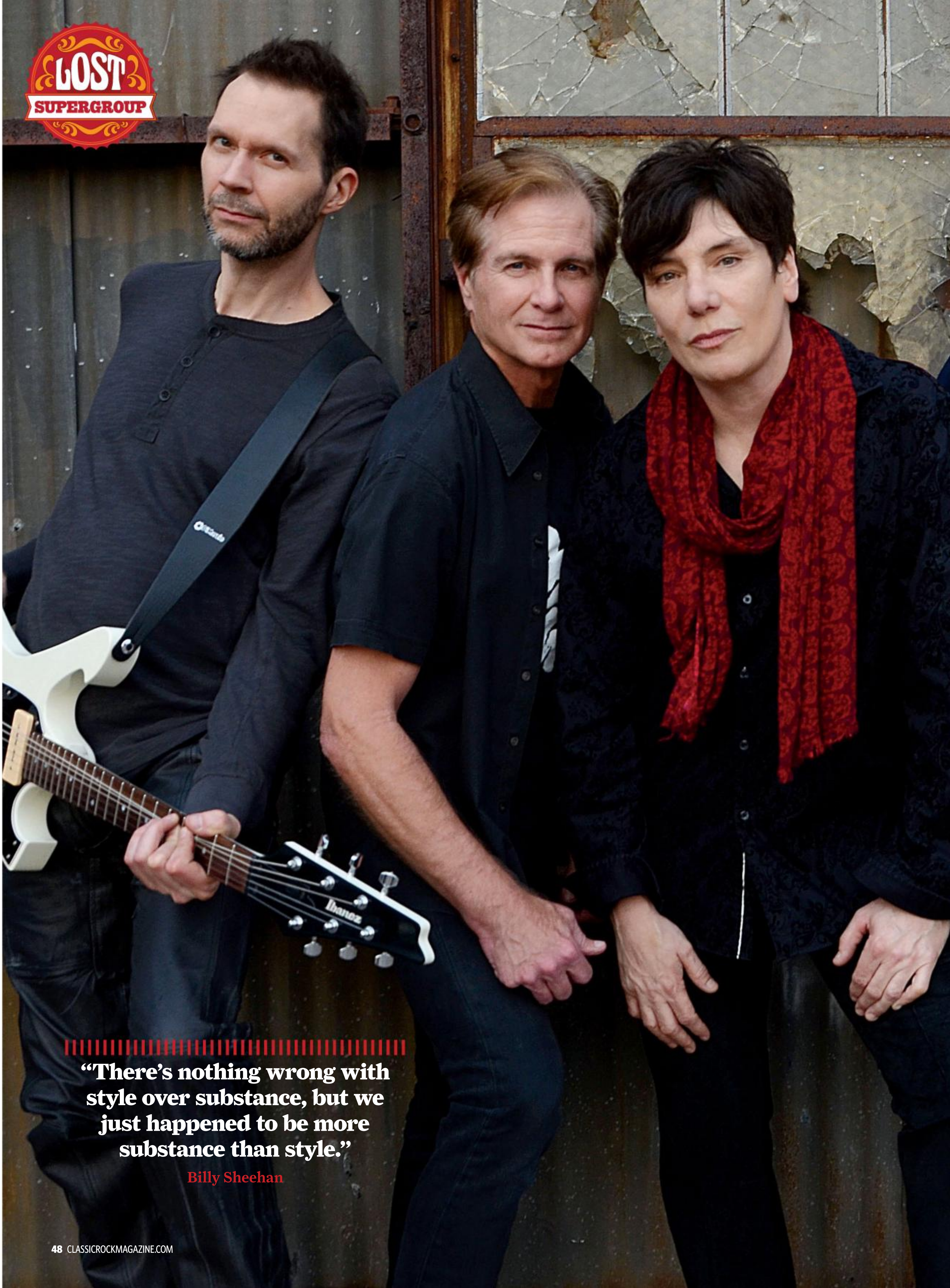
Right now, Haynes is encouraged by what he sees as a healthy jam scene in the US. "There are a lot of cool young bands starting to emerge, and that's really the key," he asserts. "For example, the Marcus King Band is getting a lot of positive feedback, and rightly so. I'm starting to see a higher bar for musicianship in the past four or five years, which I think is due to a lot of young musicians experiencing the influences that first made up that scene. There are fourteen- and fifteen-year-old kids coming to Gov't Mule shows who are now discovering Jimi Hendrix, Pink Floyd and the Allman Brothers. And it's having the same effect on them that it had on us.

"I don't think there's any way of predicting where your journey is going to wind up. And I'm very grateful that there's a scene that embraces what we love to do, because it's something that we're all still so passionate about."

Gov't Mule's Revolution Come… Revolution Go is out now via Spinefarm.

GETTY x3

LOST SUPERGROUP



> **"There's nothing wrong with style over substance, but we just happened to be more substance than style."**
>
> Billy Sheehan

THE BIG TIME

They're the supergroup who survived hair metal, grunge and even their own break-up. With a new album out now, the Mr. Big big shots give us the inside story of life in the band.

Words: **Paul Lester**

"That's kind of a touchy subject," says Mr. Big frontman Eric Martin, just as the band's tour bus pulls into Nashville. "What are you trying to get at? Are you trying to break up the band?"

He's responding to questions about what happened to the band following their *Addicted To That Rush*/*Colorado Bulldog* heyday and the colossal worldwide success they enjoyed with the ballad single *To Be With You*, having split 15 years ago. Did they struggle to sustain it? Was it tough accommodating virtuoso shredding and anthemic balladry in one unit? Were those stylistic extremes reflected by a fractious intra-band dynamic?

Mr. Big were a supergroup of sorts, who came together towards the end of the 80s. Martin was a cute-looking kid with a powerful, soulful vocal rasp. He had enjoyed some local notoriety as the singer with Bay Area band 415. Rebranded the Eric Martin Band, in 1983 they released *Sucker For A Pretty Face*, a decent album of melodic hard rock produced by Journey's producer Kevin Elson. Martin followed that with an even better self-titled solo album.

There was pressure to capitalise on that voice and those looks from his record company, who wanted him to be the next Michael Bolton, but he had more serious rock plans.

He was invited to audition for both Toto and Van Halen, but the former deemed him "too green" and Martin "chicken-shitted out" at the eleventh hour.

Before being in Mr. Big, Pat Torpey was a well-respected drummer who had played with Belinda Carlisle and The Knack; guitarist Paul Gilbert had achieved some renown for his super-fast playing with LA metal band Racer X; and Billy Sheehan, a frequent winner of Best Rock Bassist polls, had been a member of power trio Talas and the David Lee Roth band.

"Yeah, we all had a past," drawls Sheehan, the eldest of the four, in a hotel room in Connecticut three nights earlier. "I'm just not sure how successful they were. Racer X was a legendary local LA band but they never really got anywhere, Eric had three major record deals that went nowhere, and Pat ended up being kind of a sideman. I came in from the double-platinum David Lee Roth, with number-one videos and covers of magazines."

If this sounds like hubris, it's not meant to. Rather, Sheehan wanted the others to enjoy similar success to him. "I wanted to see them get exactly what I had and more, because they're so talented. It turns out they did pretty good for themselves."

According to Sheehan, there was no jostling for position when Mr. Big formed, with him as the main man. Nevertheless, Martin couldn't help being star-struck. "I didn't know how big Billy was until we walked into Warner Brothers," he remembers, "and [producer] Ted Templeman and others would stop what they were doing: [enthusiastic greeting] 'Billy!' I'm like: 'Holy shit!' He was the 'it' boy, the god of bass players."

Mr. Big had all the talent in place. All they needed was a place, a niche, to put it. Their eponymous debut album, released in 1989, wasn't glam metal (which was about to be supplanted by grunge anyway), it was melodic hard rock with dazzling shredding, soulful vocals and plenty of harmonising that came from a shared love of Crosby Stills Nash & Young and Three Dog Night. "We were like Rush with Otis Redding on vocals," Martin suggests.

"The one band we all agreed on was Free," he adds (*Mr. Big* was a track on Free's 1970 album *Fire And Water*). "When I heard Paul Gilbert play I got scared, because I didn't want to be in a Racer X kind of band, I wanted to be in a more melodic hard rock band. I was always pushing for more melody."

Their debut album, recorded in eight days with Kevin Elson at the controls, stalled at No.46, despite containing such Mr. Big favourites as *Addicted To That Rush*, *Rock & Roll Over* and *Anything For You*, the latter a sign of ballads to come.

"I was kinda bummed," Martin admits of the record's failure to really take off. "We worked so ▷

hard on it. It's just that the public wasn't going for it at the time of the Poisons and Mötley Crües."

Martin considered his coiffed contemporaries "a great shtick and colourful novelty", compared to whom Mr. Big looked dowdy in their jeans, T-shirts and jackboots. "We didn't have stylists or make-up, we had long hair from high school. We were unique. But nobody was getting it."

"Those bands didn't like us," Sheehan says of his preening, big-hair peers. "They didn't communicate with us or mention us in articles. Why? Cos we could play! There's nothing wrong with style over substance, but we just happened to be more substance than style. We didn't consciously puff our hair up or down to make a point."

Despite coming out in grunge's year zero, their second album, *Lean Into It* (1991), found Mr. Big in commercial favour. It reached No.15 and spawned hit singles with the psych-tinged *Green-Tinted Sixties Mind* and ballads *Just Take My Heart* and the enormous *To Be With You*, which went to No.1 in 15 countries. Suddenly the band, "workhorses for so long", as Martin puts it, were all over radio and TV.

"It was like going from black and white to colour," he says. "It was a wonderful time. We were travelling all over the world. Huge rock stars would come up to me. I remember one time in Barcelona, supporting Aerosmith, Steven Tyler putting his hands on me, going: 'Hey, you're a star!'"

Unlike many around them, they managed to not let fame and acclaim go to their heads, and also steered clear of the temptations that come with it.

"There were no drugs around at all," says Sheehan, a follower of Scientology, although he insists he "wouldn't want to get involved in a philosophy that had strict rules of how you live". "Pat and Paul would rarely, if ever, drink. Myself and Eric would enjoy a beer or wine. But nobody had any alcohol or substance issues at all, ever. We were just four regular guys wanting to make music."

They do admit to some womanising in some quarters, however. "We all lived vicariously through Billy Sheehan's fun sexual exploits," Martin says, laughing, but on the whole they were "pretty clean-cut kids".

"We just wanted to rock," says the singer, who had a revelatory encounter with bona fide hellraisers when Mr. Big met Skid Row. "We were all telling rock road stories. And Billy's such a great speaker, but these guys with their hedonistic shittin' and pissin' on things and people… We were kinda freaked out."

Mr. Big failed to maintain the phenomenal success that *To Be With You* in particular brought them, although they were, and remain, massive in Japan and Asia. By 1997, following the 90s albums *Bump Ahead* and *Hey Man*, Paul Gilbert decided to quit.

"He's never said it, but I know he left because of me and Billy butting heads all the time," Martin reveals. "He was like: 'I can't handle this shit any more.' That took the wind out of our sails a lot. But

Mr. Big in 1989: (l to r) Billy Sheehan, Pat Torpey, Eric Martin, Paul Gilbert.

NEIL ZLOZOWER/ATLASICONS.COM

me and Billy were never on the same page, maybe cos we weren't riding the wave like we were with *Lean Into It*. He was a very strong personality, and there was me with my big mouth."

With Richie Kotzen in place of Gilbert, the band recorded two albums – *Get Over It* (1999) and *Actual Size* (2001) – that gave Mr. Big "more of an AOR/FM radio kind of sound" according to Martin. It was a shift that didn't go down too well with Sheehan – watch the video for the single *Shine* for evidence of what Martin calls "an unhappy rock'n'roll guy".

"He hated that song," Martin says. "A couple of times I'd ask: 'Are you mad at me?' and he'd say: 'No, I just don't like what we're doing.' I actually don't think he liked me much back in the day."

According to an interview Sheehan did in 2005, it was Martin's constant sniping at his bass playing that was to blame for the bad atmosphere within the band. Martin, suspicious of *Classic Rock*'s motives in asking about that ("Are you trying to break us up?), denies being critical, but admits to some "stupid arguments" over volume ("Sorry, but I didn't want to lose my hearing"). There was nothing that could be described as violent – the only actual physical altercation between members of Mr. Big came in their early days when drummer Torpey got Martin in a chokehold because he was being, in the drummer's words, "a total jerk" – but clearly enough was enough.

"We're all together and it's actually pretty cool. At Mr. Big's worst, somebody gave somebody a dirty look."

Billy Sheehan

"I think it just ran its course," Martin decides of their original run. "I went through two wives, lost my parents and a bunch of dogs… I think we beat that horse to death. It was time to take a break."

Sheehan is sanguine about the band split in 2002. "When you're together with the same people in the same room for a long time, it starts to wear you down," he muses. "We should have maybe just taken a break. Instead we let it fall apart."

On February 1, 2009, Mr. Big announced on a Japanese radio station the reunion of the original line-up to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of their debut album, and that they would be touring and also recording a new album.

"People would constantly say: 'Why don't you get back together with Mr. Big?' After seven years of being tormented with that incessantly, we said maybe we should get back together again," Sheehan explains. "And I'm glad we did. All of us have evolved and matured, personally and musically, and we're actually enjoying this very much."

He sounds surprised. Did they have to do any apologising when they got back together?

"No, we just let it all go," he says. "We ignored the whole thing. That was then, this is now. 'Who cares?' That was everybody's point of view.

"We're cool now," he stresses. "We know how to deal with each other. I'm always really sad when I hear a band I like are at each other's throats and they stay in different hotels and travel on different buses. We're all together and it's actually pretty cool. At Mr. Big's worst, somebody gave somebody a dirty look. That's as bad as it ever got, quite frankly."

Since re-forming, there have been the albums *What If…*(2010), *…The Stories We Could Tell* (2014) and in July this year, *Defying Gravity*. On the latter, with Pat Torpey now suffering from Parkinson's, he was assisted on drums by the band's touring drummer Matt Starr. That setback aside, Martin and Sheehan both agree that Mr. Big are in a good place right now.

"There are a lot of sore muscles, but there are no monkeys on our back, we don't have a record company telling us what to do all the time, and everything is painless and stress-free," Martin says. "It's easier to deal with, and that makes us happier to be with each other."

Looking back at the global hits and big shows, such as opening for Aerosmith at Wembley Arena, is there a high point from those days?

"It's kind of a high point now," Sheehan contends. "We're still here, we're still alive and we still have people coming to our shows. I'm really pleased to be playing with these guys and have them as my friends. It's a happy ending."

Defying Gravity is out now via Frontiers Music.

PP Arnold on stage with the Small Faces: (l-r) Ian McLagan, Steve Marriott, PP, Ronnie Lane and Kenney Jones.

LOST IN THE VAULTS

PP ARNOLD

For a shining example of record industry idiocy, look no further than the curious case of PP Arnold. The soul singer looks back at the classic Clapton-produced tracks that got away – and the hunt that took her to the edge of madness.

Words: **Henry Yates**

Now 70 years of age, PP Arnold has spent most of her life chasing her past. For more than four decades, the US soul singer reminds me, she has been knocking on doors, calling in favours and rifling industry vaults, always hunting for tapes of the aborted sessions that she recorded with Barry Gibb and Eric Clapton back in the early 70s.

"It was so frustrating," she sighs. "That music has been sitting on shelves, in England, Germany, LA. You keep starting from scratch. You keep paying solicitors. I started thinking, 'I'll be an old lady soon. I want my music!'"

Inspect the sleeve of this year's *The Turning Tide* – a storming soul-blues collection which finally gathers those 13 lost songs – and you'll see its author pictured as she was then. Arriving in London as a backing singer with Ike and Tina Turner, Arnold caught the beady eye of Mick Jagger, who eased her onto Andrew Loog Oldham's Immediate label.

"Mick and I," she breathes, "we were an item. But I didn't stay in the UK to be Mick Jagger's girlfriend. Even though I was one of them. Mick was a busy boy. I recently found out that the catalyst was Ian Stewart. He apparently said, 'You got to come and hear this girl sing'."

For a kid nudging twenty, Arnold had – and has – a thrilling call-to-arms of a voice. It drove hit 60s covers such as *The First Cut Is The Deepest* and *Angel Of The Morning*, saw her backed by label-mates the Small Faces and duetting with Rod Stewart on *Come Home Baby*. "Andrew had this vision for me, bringing in all these great writers, producers and arrangers. Y'know, the whole scene was blowing up. It was before the drugs and the rip-offs, before all the jet-setting and gigantic egos took over."

Post-Immediate, Robert Stigwood brought in Barry Gibb to produce Arnold's first album for the RSO label. Her explosion seemed a done deal. "But it was a tough time for Barry, because the Bee Gees had split up. So Eric Clapton took over as producer. I was just loving that stuff. That's some down-home, funky, having-a-good-time music. As we say back home, it's the shit. But Stigwood didn't like the tracks. He didn't think they were commercial. So he just stopped the recording.

"Nobody knew what to do with me," Arnold reflects. "I got dropped. I was lost. The seventies are the lost years. We went to America and my daughter was killed in a car accident in 1977, when we were in LA. I went to Miami to work with Barry again, but once again, he had other commitments. By that time, I was old news. Stigwood wanted him to work with Dionne Warwick and Barbra Streisand."

> **"The whole scene was blowing up. It was before the drugs and the rip-offs."**
> **PP Arnold**

Arnold, to be clear, is no victim, subsequently forging a long and varied career in everything from Roger Waters' *Dark Side Of The Moon Live* to *Starlight Express*. Yet you sense that nothing has topped the thrill of that fateful day last October, when she finally clawed back her sunken treasure.

"I'd been waiting and waiting," she recalls, "and one afternoon, I thought, 'I'm gonna call Universal and have a go at whoever's taking their time with this'. I went online and there was an email saying I could have it. They were giving me everything. The digital rights. The licence. It felt incredible. Especially because it was my 70th birthday." Arnold allows herself a victorious smile. "It's been such a long fight. I tell you, there's a lot of excitement going on right now for a young girl like me. It's never too late!"

The Turning Tide is released October 6 via Kundalini Music. PP Arnold tours the UK from September 23 to October 30.

GETTY

Raise Hell, Drink Beer, Act like Lunatics, Make A Big Mess, Move On…

Think of the most outrageous gig you've ever seen. Forget it. **Butthole Surfers** took balls-out (that's just for starters) anarchic performance 'art' to a debauched new low.

Words: **Rob Hughes**

Legends can grow in many ways. In the case of the Butthole Surfers, theirs was forged on the road, where they took auto-destruction to a lurid new level of trippy performance art.

"I think we inspired other people to be more debauched," says bassist Jeff Pinkus. "At a show at the Danceteria in New York there were piss bombs, there was glitter, fire, nudity, fake penetration – possibly real penetration – and screwdrivers mixing with monitor wedges. A lot of aggression came out that night, a lot of emotions. It was a brown rainbow."

That night at the Danceteria, in early 1986, the band made it through only five songs before the entire gig blew up in a maelstrom of feedback, flames, flashing strobes, film projections and thick dry ice. Plus the spectacle of naked frontman Gibby Haynes and dancer Kathleen Lynch appearing to hump each other in front of the drum riser. This may have been extreme by Butthole Surfers standards (certainly the onstage sex, simulated or otherwise), but not overly so.

"We'd asked ourselves what we wanted to see from a rock band, something that nobody else was doing," guitarist Paul Leary explains. "We were influenced by psychedelic bands so we wanted strobes. Soon we had shotguns, walls of strobe lights and movies showing penis reconstruction. It just seemed like a kick in the ass to do. It helped that there was no message we were trying to convey. It was all kinda nihilistic."

This sense of delinquent mayhem also extended to the band's off-stage conduct. "It was just a party every night," Leary says. "Gibby was definitely our ringleader. We would go into a new town every day, raise as much hell as we wanted, get to drink beer for free, act like lunatics, make a big mess and then move on to the next town."

Similarly, there were no half measures when it came to their music. The Surfers took elements of punk, metal, psychedelia and experimental noise to create a misfit rock governed only by chaos and fortuity. Their songs could be terrifying, brutal, brilliant, funny, dark and downright weird. Sometimes all at once. And while the majority of 80s indiedom tended towards either fey guitar-pop or post-hardcore rigour, Butthole Surfers offered a lifeline to the open-ended expressionism of the late 60s. Factor in a love of tape manipulation and sampled effects and they sounded like nothing else around, especially on anything-goes triumphs like *Locust Abortion Technician* and *Rembrandt Pussyhorse*.

Given the anarchic nature of their recorded output and the trail of carnage they've left behind on tour, it's difficult to reconcile Butthole Surfers with their straight-laced beginnings. Haynes and Leary first met in 1977, when both were studying at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. "Gibby was the guy with the punk haircut and the leather jacket at university," recalls Leary. "I got together with him and we discovered we liked the same kind of music: Black Flag, Suicide, Dead Kennedys, that kind of stuff."

As a pre-echo of the Surfers' transgressive humour and fondness for dallying at the threshold of acceptable taste, the pair created *Strange V.D.*, a magazine dedicated to curious medical ailments, complete with comic text. Haynes's accountancy career ended when his bosses found one of the magazine's pages in the company printer.

By then, though, he and Leary had already formed the first incarnation of what would become Butthole Surfers.

"We'd go over to our drummer's house in the evening and start rehearsing," says Leary. "Gibby would usually get off work late at the accountancy firm, stumble into practice in his suit and tie, and immediately start stripping down to his boxer shorts while we were playing. That's how it got incorporated into our live show. We'd play until the police came and turned the power off."

Leary insists there was no great plan when it came to the Surfers. Rather, following a gig with The Minutemen in 1982, they simply decided to drive their van to San Francisco and cast their fate to the wind.

"We made it as far as the Bay Bridge, but our van broke down at the top," he remembers. "So we coasted down the bridge, not knowing where we were going, took the first exit and came to a stop in front of this building. Then we noticed that there were punk rockers loading musical equipment inside, so we

> **"At one show there were piss bombs, glitter, fire, nudity, penetration and screwdrivers mixing with monitor wedges."**
> Jeff Pinkus

LOST MISFIT ROCKERS

started loading our gear in too. We bellyached until they told us we could play three songs that night. It turned out that the Dead Kennedys showed up, and [DK mainman] Jello Biafra offered us a record deal. We literally coasted into it with a broken engine. It was bizarre how things fell into place."

Biafra's Alternative Tentacles label released the Surfers' debut EP in the summer of '83. It was a fitting introduction to the crazed absurdity of Butthole Surfers' world, from *The Shah Sleeps In Lee Harvey's Grave* to the crude scatology of *The Revenge Of Anus Presley*. Kurt Cobain listed the record in his top ten albums of all time.

The band moved on to Touch And Go Records the following year to record their first full-length album, *Psychic… Powerless… Another Man's Sac,* which heralded the arrival of the twin drummer set-up of King Coffey and Teresa Nervosa.

Fuelled by a steady diet of weed, beer and acid, Butthole Surfers were quickly earning a reputation as a spectacular touring unit. On stage, Coffey and Nervosa both stood behind their kits as they hammered out savage rhythms, Leary's psychotic guitar blare was mirrored by his unnerving gaze, and Haynes was the yowling provocateur out front, goading the audience and venue officials with acts of pyromania – when he wasn't setting fire to his hand, he was striking an upturned cymbal full of rubbing alcohol and watching mushroom fireballs leap into the air.

"Then he began shooting a shotgun off at shows, and the fire department started turning up at sound-checks," says Leary. "The weird thing was they'd arrest our dancer for being naked, but they didn't mind the shotgun or the flames."

The Surfers' notoriety spread quickly to Europe. At Holland's Pandora Festival in October 1985, Leary recalls: "Gibby had drunk a bottle of whisky and ended up heaving chairs into the audience. Next thing I knew, Gibby was naked and fighting with all the bouncers. He almost fell to his death. I picked up a newspaper the next day and there was a picture of him with that bottle of whisky. It created a sensation, so I guess that reputation followed us to London. When we played the Mean Fiddler, the crowd rushed the barricades and all of a sudden it was a riot. They brought in police and dogs and stuff."

Jeff Pinkus joined the madhouse that was Butthole Surfers in late '85, prior to the recording of *Locust Abortion Technician*. ▷

WEIRD REVOLUTIONS

A Butthole Surfers playlist.

Lady Sniff
Psychic... Powerless... Another Man's Sac, 1984
Post-Beefheart blues with a twisted grin, complete with heavy guitar, snapping bass and Haynes indulging his fondness for tape manipulation. Cue a coarse volley of bizarro sounds (phlegm, farts, burps, vomit) and absurd lyrical utterances. Altogether now: "Bernie, bring me my bacon!"

Creep In The Cellar
Rembrandt Pussyhorse, 1986
Taken from perhaps their most experimental record, this disquieting exercise in crawling dread features sombre piano and backwards violin (the result of the Surfers recording over an old country & western tape and accidentally leaving it in). They reprised the song, in heavily distorted form, on album closer *In The Cellar*.

Sweat Loaf
Locust Abortion Technician, 1987
Leary borrows the riff from Black Sabbath's *Sweet Leaf* and makes it squeal with malevolent intent, while Haynes grabs a megaphone and unleashes a stream of effects-laden Gibbytronix over the top. Its churning physicality proved to be a foreshadow of grunge.

Human Cannonball
Locust Abortion Technician, 1987
This schizoid rant showcases not only the Surfers' undervalued gift for melody, but also Haynes's debt to the post-punk vocalese of John Lydon or Jello Biafra. The protagonist's tale (cut to the bone by a reproachful lover) spurts forth over the tribal thump of drummers Coffey and Nervosa.

Jimi
Hairway To Steven, 1988
Extreme noise terror on a disturbing scale, as Haynes veers between frightened child and demonic presence over an avant-rock jam that takes up the majority of the song's 12-plus minutes. It finally subsides into an acoustic ambient piece featuring birdsong and sheep. "God almighty, what were we thinking?" Leary says today.

Who Was In My Room Last Night?
Independent Worm Saloon, 1993
Produced by Led Zep's John Paul Jones, this deeply paranoid vision (*'The pounding on my window's just the pounding in my head,'* Haynes bemoans) is roughed up by Leary's great metal riff. The track made it onto both *Guitar Hero II* and an episode of *Beavis And Butt-head*.

Butthole Surfers in 2011: (l-r) Jeff Pinkus, Gibby Haynes, Paul Leary, King Coffey.

"I was only eighteen when I did my first show," he says. "For three years there were five of us and a dog, sleeping on people's floors, being sick all the time. People think it's weird to take acid every day, but when we lived like we did, that was the only thing that made it normal. Some of the best days I've ever had were the result of waking up and taking sleeping pills."

Even a major-label deal didn't alter their lifestyle or creative process, despite Capitol's insistence that John Paul Jones be brought in as producer to shape 1993's *Independent Worm Saloon* into something more palatable for a rock audience.

"I'd been messing around in the back room of my house and recorded a lot of guitar that ended up on that album," says Leary. "So our working methods didn't really change a whole lot, other than the fact we had a budget and the bass player from Led Zeppelin.

"He was a lot of fun. We showed up at the studio and John Paul Jones and I discovered we liked the same brand of whisky, so we ordered a bottle of sixteen-year-old Lagavulin Scotch and drank it. The next day they brought two bottles and we drank those. They kept doubling the number of bottles. We ended up drinking until six o'clock every morning. I believe he quit drinking altogether after that."

"Our working methods didn't change, other than we had a budget and the bass player from Led Zeppelin."

The only thing that could undo Butthole Surfers, it transpired, was their own success. In 1996 they scored a Top 40 album with the more streamlined *Electriclarryland*, helped by a hit single, *Pepper*. The band found themselves on heavy rotation on MTV and, along with the likes of Radiohead and Garbage, on the soundtrack of Baz Luhrmann's film *Romeo + Juliet*.

"When we signed to Capitol, they didn't have a clue what to suggest or demand," Leary says. "That was until we had a gold record and a hit. All of sudden people were lining up around the block, telling us what to do. Having a hit single was not a whole lot of fun."

A dispute with the label left a proposed new album, *After The Astronaut*, in limbo. Then came the Surfers' acrimonious split from their manager. Finally, in 2001, the *Astronaut* recordings were salvaged for *Weird Revolution*, a belated sequel to *Electriclarryland*.

It was an experience that left deep scars. The band split up soon after, each member going their separate way. Gibby Haynes And His Problem were formed in 2004, while Leary combined a new band, Carny, with production work.

The first of several sporadic reunions took place in 2008, but Butthole Surfers seemed over, as a creative entity at least. An unexpected return at Houston's Day For Night festival last December was their first show for five years. Then came the announcement that the Surfers were due to play the Safe As Milk bash in Prestatyn, Wales in April this year, but the event was cancelled. Hwowever, it's not the end of the Surfers' tale…

"We've got a couple of interested labels, and the goal is to record a new album this summer," Leary reveals. "I realise that we're middle-aged men now, but we're gonna do it, because that's what we do. Making *Weird Revolution* was a gut-wrenching process, and it put us out of commission for a long time. It was such a painful thing to go through that it's taken sixteen years to get over it. Now I figure we have a shot at going back and doing things the way we want. It's time to try it again."

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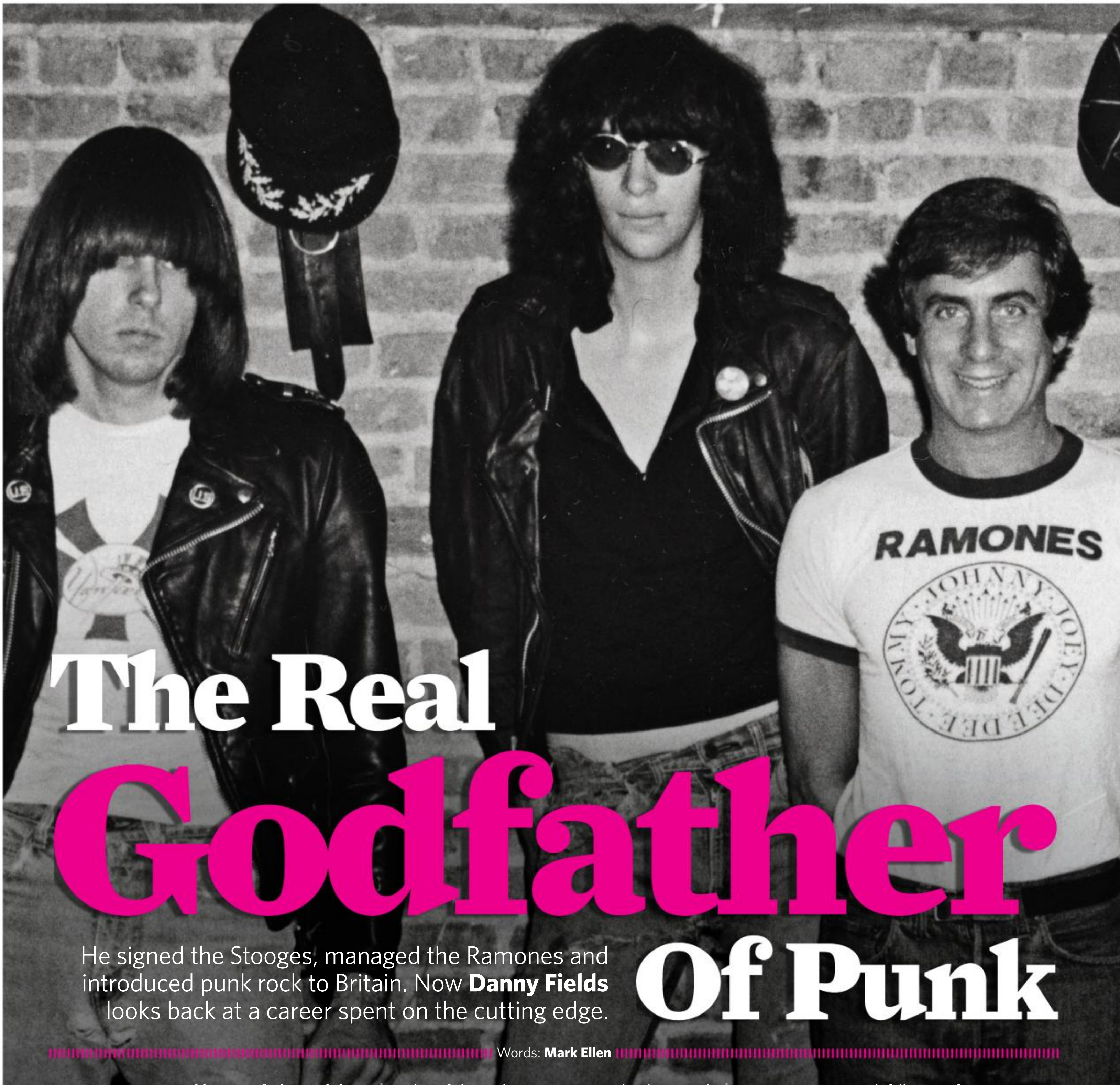


The Real Godfather Of Punk

He signed the Stooges, managed the Ramones and introduced punk rock to Britain. Now **Danny Fields** looks back at a career spent on the cutting edge.

Words: **Mark Ellen**

Danny Fields, now a fairly sprightly 77, was living in New York in the early 60s and became friends with Andy Warhol and the Velvet Underground. He worked with The Doors as a press officer at Elektra, signed the MC5, signed and managed Iggy Pop and the Stooges, and managed the Ramones for five years from 1975. When he brought the Ramones over to play the Roundhouse in London in '76, they had a huge impact on the key players from the British punk scene in the audience. You could make a convincing case that without Danny Fields, punk rock might never have happened.

Was Lou Reed as hostile as he often appeared in the press?

Lou Reed was the loveliest, sweetest person I knew. We were very close in the early days. The press thought he was hostile – he always seemed to be picking fights and was arrogant. But he always said: "When people pressed the Record button, I had to become Lou Reed." There was a lot of arrogance about that Warhol crowd: "We're the coolest people in New York." And we were!

Is it true that when their early drummer Angus MacLise heard the Velvet Underground had their first paying gig, he quit in protest, as he thought it was 'selling out'?

Yeah. He said, "Fuck you." That's what you have to do if you're presenting avant-garde rebellion as your trademark!

I first saw them at the Cafe Wha? in the Village and fell in love with them – the melody, the beat, the songs. Disparate, brilliant people. They just came together in this shocking, beautiful, *urgent* music. They hated that Californian world, and listened to Tin Pan Alley. John Cale was into avant-garde, a brilliant musician. Lou was this insane, neurotic Jewish folk singer from Long Island. Sterling Morrison was a straight-and-narrow academic. Maureen [Tucker]… The drummer, didn't show up one day, and someone said: "Oh, my sister's got a drum kit, why don't you give her a try?" I was the editor of *Datebook* magazine, which had this immense power, and I was the first person to run a picture of the Velvet Underground in a national magazine. Which was great, as from just being a fan I could now *do* something to help them.

What did you think when you saw the MC5?

I was publicist at Elektra Records and The Doors were breaking. *Light My Fire* was Number One and I was getting Jim Morrison into teen magazines. Elektra had Love and Paul Butterfield but it was mainly folk like Judy Collins. They were discovering a pot of gold in rock'n'roll and wanted more rock acts.

Honorary brudda: Danny Fields with the Ramones.

I heard about this band in Detroit who were intensely left-wing and anti-establishment, as we all were. They were the sons of Detroit automakers – their parents were like hillbillies who came from the south to make cars. And I saw them in Detroit's Grande Ballroom and loved them. Three thousand people there – they already had this huge fan base. They had energy and spun around and had a lot of hair and were sexy and tough; Chuck Berry riffs and free jazz.

And they lived in a commune, and I'd never seen that before. They had beautiful posters and newsletters in vibrant colours, and their message was "tear down the walls" and "dope, rock'n'roll and fucking in the street". Who's gonna say no? "Let's kick out the jams" – whatever 'the jams' were!

They were so disruptive, verbally and politically – the only band to play at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago, where there were riots.

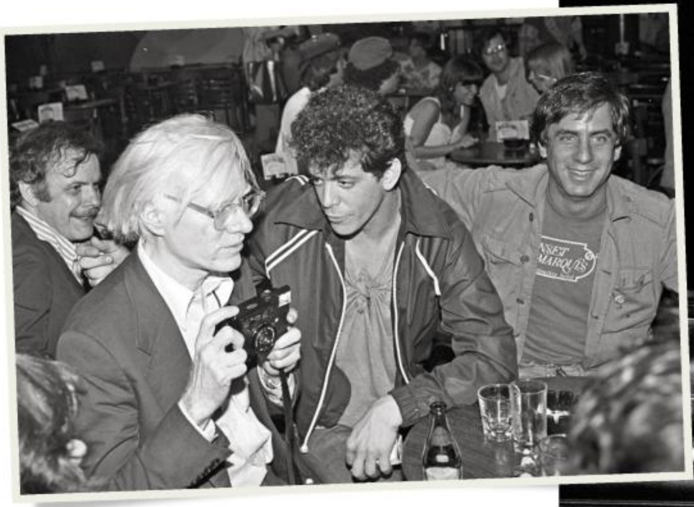
And the MC5 led you to the Stooges?

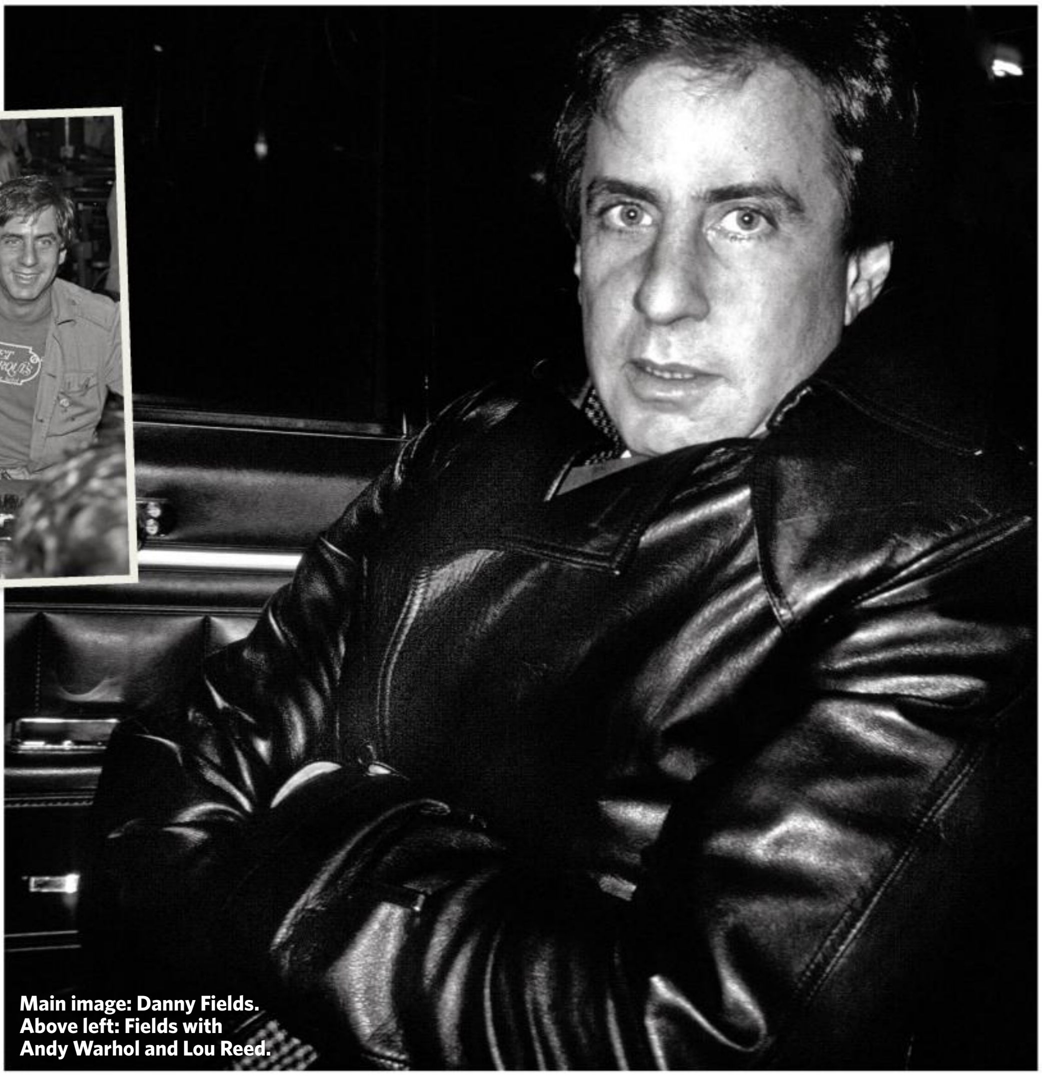
[MC5 guitarist] Wayne Kramer said afterwards: "If you like us, you're really going to like our little brother band, the Psychedelic Stooges."

So I went to see them, and I remember entering the hall and hearing this music like an orgasm: thrilling! You could feel the bass, the sound coming through the floor, something atavistic, something influenced by the primal forces of God and the devil. And then there was Iggy, the young, lunatic Iggy Pop. Skinny, great dancer, like nothing else I'd ever seen, an atom bomb in a lighting bolt. Their attitude was: "We don't give a fuck – this sounds like a good riff so let's just keep doing it."

"Ramones were loud and swift and really smart and ambitious and their songs were perfect."

They once used oil drums beaten with hammers on stage. Iggy had seen Jim Morrison half-naked on stage and thought: "I'll be bold and sexy and daring and menacing too." Though he was far more menacing than Jim Morrison ever was. I talked to him afterwards, but he thought I was a dirty old man trying to pick him up. I rang Jac Holzman [head of Elektra] and said: "I've seen these two groups you should sign. The first one sold out the Grande Ballroom to a lot of rich white kids from the suburbs, and the other group are a bit far out but they're going to *be* something." He said to offer the MC5 twenty thousand dollars for a five-year contract and offer the Stooges five thousand dollars. And they both said yes. ▷





Main image: Danny Fields. Above left: Fields with Andy Warhol and Lou Reed.

Did you ever see Iggy on stage with his chest smeared with hamburger and peanut butter?
Oh yes! He tried to do something different each time. You felt the whole thing might end up on the front pages – there will be blood! One time he kicked these people off this heavy wooden bench in the front row and then picked it up and held it over their heads. I've seen him climb up pipes and curtain rods to the ceiling and perform from up there. Broken glass, chopped meat.

He threw himself onto tables full of glasses, lacerated his skin. He's a mess now. You don't do that for fifty years and come away unscathed. He's done irreparable damage to his moving parts.

The phrase 'punk rock' hadn't been invented then, but I liked the fact that half the people hated the Stooges and the other half were ecstatic and thought: "This is tomorrow!"

As the Stooges' co-manager, did you ever give Iggy any advice?
"Take that needle out of your arm, come out of the john and get on stage, it's show time." Most junkies don't make it out the other side. All of the original Stooges are dead except for Iggy. All four original Ramones are dead too.

Speaking of the Ramones, what was your first impression of them?
They kept calling me. I had a weekly column in a Soho newspaper and they wanted me to write about them, as I was writing about Patti Smith and the New York Dolls. I loved them from the second I saw them. They were adorable – great hair, that guy look, a uniform but not a uniform. They realised the New York Dolls had a look and knew they had to do the same, and they briefly flirted with glam – Joey had a head-to-toe pink leather thing, and there's pictures of Johnny in lamé pants. Then they thought, "Let's just wear what we're wearing – leather jackets, sneakers, ripped jeans." They sounded overwhelming, a blast, like a nuclear-powered train coming at you, and their sets were seventeen minutes long – about ten songs. Perfect! No guitar solos.

They were funny, mad, brilliant, imaginative. They read comic books and art stories and horror, and watched movies and listened to the radio, and were brought up on the mythology of all that nonsense. We hate everybody! You'd be in the van with them and they'd go: "Look – there's a guy with a beard. Let's run him over!"

They were loud and swift and really smart and ambitious and their songs were perfect. We met up outside CBGB afterwards that night and they said: "Are you going to write about us?" And I said: "I want to *manage* you. You're the future!" I managed them from 1975 to 1980.

> **"MC5 had energy and spun around and had a lot of hair and were sexy and tough; Chuck Berry riffs and free jazz."**

The internal politics of the Ramones sounded nightmarish. Did they detest each other?
They hated each other but they loved each other. Maybe that's what fuelled them. Joey's girlfriend left him and married Johnny, and it got so bad they used to talk through a third person. I didn't care if they stabbed each other as long as they made it to the show – though Dee Dee *did* actually have a stabber girlfriend, Connie. Dead now. She stabbed him in the ass, and tried to cut off the thumb of the bass player of the New York Dolls.

Do you remember them meeting the Clash and the Damned when they played in London in 1976, the passing of the punk rock baton?
Joe Strummer got it instantly when he saw the Ramones. He said: "You couldn't slide a cigarette paper between the songs. Why stop and tune up? Do you think anyone's going to know if you're out of tune? Just keep playing! Make it like one song. The only thing that matters is, don't fuck up the beat." [Clash bassist] Paul Simonon was in the dressing room at the Roundhouse, and Johnny told him: "No one cares. Just go and play, do rock'n'roll like we do, cos we can't play – we suck, we're terrible."

The New York Dolls couldn't play either – terrible musicians. But it didn't matter, cos they created a universe they owned from the moment they were in front of an audience. And here's the ultimate irony: the Ramones were told they'd never have any hits, as radio liked two-minute-thirty-second songs, not one-minute-ten. And they *didn't* have any hits, but *'Hey, ho, let's go!'* – that five-second snippet – is playing in some football stadium right now somewhere in the world, like *We Will Rock You* by Queen, and that's how they made their fortunes. They made billions from the use of that – *ker-ching!* A five-second cut from one-minute-ten!

Johnny and Joey were multimillionaires when they died. Joey particularly grew up feeling ungainly, stupid, ugly, too tall, left out, beat up and thrown down the stairs at school for being six-foot-six. By the end he was like royalty – truck drivers would stop and shake his hand.

None of the bands at CBGB – Television, Ramones, Blondie, Suicide – were doing the same thing, so it wasn't all punk rock, but in the UK there was a political dimension to it and it was all part of the punk movement. As Plato said: "When the mode of the music changes, the walls of the city shake." And punk was a change in the mode of the music, from the Velvet Underground to the Stooges to the Ramones.

The deluxe edition of the Ramones' second album, Leave Home, is out now via Rhino.

GETTY x2

GLENN HUGHES | BLACKBERRY SMOKE | RIVAL SONS | ZZ TOP | Cheap Trick

GLENN HUGHES | RICHARD TURNER | SCOTT HOLIDAY | BILLY GIBBONS | TOM PETERSSON

LOST PIONEER

Cyril Davies (right) and Ramblin' Jack Elliott at The Roundhouse, London in 1958.

CYRIL DAVIES

What do The Kinks, Stones and The Who all have in common? For one thing, a bluesman nicknamed 'Squirrel', who inspired and gave a helping hand to the brightest of early British bands.

Words: **Kris Needs**

Hailed by many as the best blues harmonica player this country ever produced, Cyril Davies was a grumpy, balding panel beater who happened to lead the London R&B scene that shaped British rock, yet made few records before passing away in January 1964 at the age of only 31.

The man nicknamed 'Squirrel' was an aggressive purist who blew with untamed elemental power in Blues Incorporated; the world's first white electric blues band he formed with the better-known Alexis Korner and one of the most significant outfits in the history of British rock'n'roll. Cyril helped the nascent Rolling Stones with early gigs and encouragement and inspired Ray Davies to make a go of The Kinks. Jimmy Page says he "pioneered a sound that was to give incentive to every group of the time". But, curiously and unjustly, Cyril has been all but air-brushed out of the musical history he helped shape.

Born in 1932 in the Buckinghamshire commuter town of Denham, by the early 50s Cyril was running his own auto repair and salvage business. After playing trad jazz guitar in pubs, he opened the London Skiffle Centre upstairs at the Roundhouse pub on Wardour Street in 1955 and sang Lead Belly songs on 12-string guitar. The Roundhouse became the epicentre of London's blues movement after Davies met the likeminded Korner and, at Cyril's suggestion, became the London Blues and Barrelhouse Club, booking American legends Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, Muddy Waters and Memphis Slim.

In February 1957, the renamed Alexis Korner's Breakdown Group Featuring Cyril Davies recorded *Blues From The Roundhouse*, including heartfelt blues, skiffle and Cyril's three Lead Belly covers. The band had become Alexis Korner's Blues Incorporated by the time it recorded *Volume Two* in April 1958. That October, Muddy Waters visited the UK to play his only London club date at the Roundhouse – said to be the first time an electric guitar had been seen in a London club, and was duly heckled. Muddy's tough electric blues proved a revelation for Cyril, who amplified his harp with a small pick-up covered with rubber from a bicycle tyre attached to a cable.

"I learned an enormous amount from Cyril, but he was very gruff."

Mick Jagger

After being thrown out of the Roundhouse for being too loud, Korner and Davies opened the Ealing Club, opposite Ealing Broadway tube station, in March 1962. The leaky basement was always packed, attracting like-minded acolytes, including Mick Jagger (who'd get up to sing), Keith Richards, Rod Stewart, Jimmy Page, John Mayall, Eric Clapton, Eric Burdon and bottleneck guitar maestro Brian Jones. Even Jagger suffered

TERRY CRYER

Left: Cyril with Jack Bruce (right) and Dick Heckstall-Smith in Blues Inc, and below with Long John Baldry.

Cyril's legendary bluntness, recalling, "I learned an enormous amount from Cyril, but he wasn't an expansive person, he was very gruff, almost to the point of rudeness." Richards remembers "he used to drink bourbon like a fish".

Chris Barber booked Blues Inc. to host the first 'Rhythm & Blues Night' at the Marquee every Thursday from May. After the residency resulted in a Decca contract, Blues Inc. recorded *R&B At The Marquee*, which included Muddy and Korner tunes plus Cyril's abrasive *Spooky But Nice* and *Keep Your Hands Off*. August saw Ginger Baker replace the Stones-bound Charlie Watts in Blues Inc., joined by bassist Jack Bruce then anarchic sax hurricane Graham Bond. Disapproving of these jazzier elements, Cyril left to form his All-Stars with members of Screaming Lord Sutch's Savages, including future Stones pianist Nicky Hopkins, and Jimmy Page before he started concentrating on session work. "I don't like to see the music messed about with," announced Cyril. "I like it straight."

January 1963 saw Korner move to the Flamingo, while Cyril retained the Marquee (The Stones were given the interval slot but soon shown the door when they requested more money). Cyril's new band also played the Roaring Twenties, Piccadilly Club and Eel Pie Island. Jimmy Page was often in the audience, recalling, "It was a fantastic band, the best blues band of the day."

After signing to PyeRecords in February, the All Stars recorded what was effectively the first British blues single, locomotive stage fave *Country Line Special* and *Chicago Calling*, Cyril's yearning tribute to the city he would never see. Hugely influential, Ray Davies called it "the record that kick-started The Kinks… one of the greatest records of its type ever made… I saw the band when I was at Hornsey Art School in 1962… The Kinks came through after that."

Pete Townshend described it as "one of my hottest tracks at the time!", and asked Hopkins to play on The Who's first album.

August saw a second single: Cyril's evangelical *Preachin' The Blues* and Lead Belly's *Sweet Mary*, promoted by tours with Gerry And The Pacemakers and Billy J Kramer.

"On pop tours I shall still play the same way," declared Cyril. "I can't play any other. You have to try to bend the public, not the music." The All-Stars were guests on the Beatles' *Pop Go The Beatles* radio series and appeared at the 1963 National Jazz and Blues festival in Richmond when the Rolling Stones were first band on.

By now, the hard-living blues lifestyle Cyril worshipped, including violence and villainy, had given him pleurisy. He died on January 7, 1964 from endocarditis, an inflammation of the heart's inner layer, and never saw the world-changing impact of his pure blues mission.

Preachin' The Blues: The Cyril Davies Memorial Album, gathers every track he appeared on in his tragically short career, showing an untamed genius just starting his tragically curtailed journey.

For more, visit cyrildavies.com

PICS COURTESY OF CYRILDAVIES.COM, TYLER/GETTY

LOST INSTRUMENT

Hot air: Aerosmith's Steven Tyler.

THE MISSISSIPPI SAXOPHONE

…or the harmonica, as it's better known. We take a look at one of the sounds that shaped rock'n'roll.

'*The blues had a baby and they named it rock'n'roll,*' sang Muddy Waters. And he was right, of course. Once he and Howlin' Wolf started plugging into amps in the clubs of Chicago in the 1950s, the blues became supercharged; a tougher, urban sound that prioritised electric guitar and lascivious lyrics.

And central to Chicago blues was the harmonica. Marion 'Little Walter' Jacobs pioneered a new amplified approach, radically transforming it into a powerful lead instrument. Subsequently, the blues became increasingly intertwined with rock'n'roll, with The Yardbirds backing then-unknown harp player Sonny Boy Williamson on a UK tour and releasing the 1963 album *Sonny Boy Williamson And The Yardbirds*. Not that the notoriously surly Williamson was impressed, observing: "These young English boys wanna play the blues so bad; and they play it – so bad."

As black music began to cross over and reach wider audiences of young, white rock fans, the harmonica was pushed further into the mainstream – nobody being more responsible for that than Paul Butterfield. *The Paul Butterfield Blues Band*, released in 1965, showcased the singer's virtuosic ability on the instrument. But while clearly influenced by the Chicago masters, this was resolutely rock music. Suddenly the blues harp, as it became known, was appearing on some of the biggest hits of the time, such as wailing over The Doors' classic *Roadhouse Blues*, or its mystical presence on Canned Heat's *On the Road Again*?

The harmonica's prominence peaked during the 70s, with a number of the rock musicians keen to embrace its earthy authenticity. Robert Plant does his best Sonny Boy impression on *Bring It On Home* and blows a raucous solo on *Nobody's Fault But Mine*, though the instrument is at its most effective on *When The Levee Breaks*. Keith Richards maintains that Mick Jagger is one of the best exponents of the blues harp, and his playing has enriched some of the Stones' finest moments. *Midnight Rambler* wouldn't sound so sweet without a little lubrication from Mick's harp, and his solo on *Gimme Shelter* makes the track sound even more menacing.

Of the many high-profile rock'n'rollers who play the harmonica, Steven Tyler is arguably the most accomplished. From *One Way Street* on Aerosmith's debut to huge hits such as *Pink* and *Cryin'*, Tyler has always pulled a tasteful bluesy line from the 'Mississippi saxophone'.

As the decades rolled on, the instrument seemed to fall out of favour, although Spike or Mike Monroe might whip it out on occasion. It may have had its day in the sun as far as modern rock is concerned, but the sound of the humble harmonica is still blowing in the wind.

Patrick Wells

LOST ORIGINAL LINE-UP

Alice In Wonderland

With members of his original band back on board, Alice Cooper has plugged into his prime-time past, reclaimed some lost songs and come up with a new album that's both classic and modern.

Words: **Rob Hughes**

Alice Cooper has firm views on what constitutes rock'n'roll. "Rock bands should scare you," he declares. "They should be arrogant, snotty and have real swagger. There's some good hard rock bands right now – Foo Fighters, The Struts, Royal Blood – but I can't believe how many anaemic ones there are. What's happened to the testosterone in rock'n'roll? The world needs hard rock with attitude, bands who get up there and kill it every night."

You could hardly accuse Alice of being anaemic. Or, for that matter, holding back on stage. He's spent most of the past fifty years as the undisputed cock of shock rock, the high priest of Grand Guignol, a man who tore up rock'n'roll, limb by bloody limb, and created high theatre from sex, death and gore. And, more than 50 million album sales later, he's still at it.

Now aged 69, today wearing black leathers and fashionably ripped jeans, a whip-thin Alice looks healthy as he holds court in a swish hotel in central London. He's here to promote *Paranormal*, the 27th studio album of his career and the first since 2011's *Welcome 2 My Nightmare*. It's a record that finds him doing what he does best: meting out a series of twisted tales over brutal riff-rock and climbing choruses. It's loud, macabre and funny in all the right places. There are badass songs about rats, phantoms, cross-dressers, Angels of Death and Victoria's Secret models, and a whole lot more besides. In short: classic Alice.

"Alice Cooper will always be hard rock," he states, reinforcing his modus operandi. "I'll never move away from that. It will always be a guitar-driven rock'n'roll album and I'll surround myself with the best players. That way it's a protection for me. I can write the lyrics and go all over the place, but I know that the band is top-of-the-line. That's the smart thing you have to do."

True to his word, *Paranormal* is crawling with talent. As well as guitarists Tommy Henriksen and Tommy Denander, Cooper has also retained ace producer Bob Ezrin from *Welcome 2 My Nightmare*. He and Ezrin go way back, of course, having first worked together on 1971's *Love It To Death*, the album that broke the Alice Cooper band at home in the US and abroad. Several top-drawer guest musicians make cameos: ZZ Top guitarist Billy Gibbons, Deep Purple bassist Roger Glover and U2 drummer Larry Mullen Jr.

It's a choice of personnel that, besides Ezrin, sometimes circles back to Alice's 70s prime. He and Gibbons, for example, have shared history. "We took ZZ Top out on their first tour," Alice recalls. "I've always loved Billy's guitar playing. It's a very specific, blues-driven kind of thing. When we wrote *Fallen In Love* for the new album, it was suddenly a Texas roadhouse song. I looked at Bob and went: 'Billy Gibbons.' He went: 'Oh yeah.' We called him up, sent him the song and he goes: 'I got the flu right now, but this song makes me feel better.' He just nailed it. It couldn't have been anybody else but Billy."

> **"When we started planning this album, I wanted to include Neal Dennis and Mike."**
> ALICE COOPER

For all its slickness and modernity, however, the most intriguing aspect of *Paranormal* is that it plugs further into Alice's past. Original bandmates Michael Bruce (guitar), Dennis Dunaway (bass) and Neal Smith (drums), with whom Alice reunited for several tracks on *Welcome 2 My Nightmare*, are on board for this one too. As well as co-writing a number of the new songs, the entire band stomp their way through *Genuine American Girl* and *You And All Your Friends*, leaving the distinct footprint of the group that recorded such 70s-defining classics as *I'm Eighteen, School's Out, Elected* and *No More Mr. Nice Guy*.

"When we started planning this album, I'd said to Bob: 'Let's write twenty songs, and the best thirteen get on the album,'" Alice explains. "A lot of people gave us their ideas, and I wanted to include Neal, Dennis and Mike [Alice Cooper band co-founder and lead guitarist Glen Buxton passed away in 1997]. The great thing about the original band was that when we broke up we did it without any bad blood. We'd been through a lot together – from being hated, loved, poor, rich – but we got to a point where we were creatively bankrupt after *Muscle Of Love* [1973]. We were just tired and drifted away from each other. Throughout the years I stayed in touch with them. We were never enemies.

"I told Neal I was writing songs for this new album and he said: 'I've got a couple of things. And Mike's in town.' So I told him to bring Mike over too, and we wrote probably ten songs. Dennis sent a couple in as well.

"It was always a good experience with those guys," he continues. "Dennis is one of the oddest songwriters and most prolific bass players there ▷

ROB FENN/PRESS

SUPER
SUPER

Photo session for the cover of 1971's *Killer*: (l-r) Michael Bruce, Dennis Dunaway, Alice, Glen Buxton, Neal Smith.

Original AC band survivors: (l-r) Dennis Dunaway, AC, Michael Bruce (seated), Neal Smith.

is. Neal doesn't play like anybody else – Bob Ezrin once said that he plays drums like an octopus falling out of a tree. Neal would find out how many drums Keith Moon had and get one more. Then call him and tell him [laughs]. Mike Bruce was the king of the riff. He'd come up with these very simple riff songs that were so hard to get away from – *No More Mr. Nice Guy, Be My Lover.* And they're the most powerful ones, the songs that hit you between the eyes."

Perhaps the most striking track on *Paranormal* is *The Sound Of A*. A moody, trippy, slightly sinister meditation, it seems to sit apart from the others, as if suspended in time. It turns out there's a pretty good reason for this. And a great backstory.

"Dennis brought in [end-of-days rocker] *Fireball* and *You And All Your Friends*, then he said: 'I want you to listen to this,'" Alice says. "And he played me the tape of *The Sound Of A*. I went: 'Wow! I remember you wrote that, Dennis.' And he goes: 'It was 1967, and I didn't write it, *you* did. It was the first song you ever wrote by yourself.'

"When we played the Cheetah Club in Santa Monica with Pink Floyd [November 1967, on Floyd's first US tour], they stayed at our house for two days. I was probably smoking grass for the first or second time, took my guitar into the other room, wrote this song, put it on tape and forgot all about it. It's the craziest thing. Bob heard it and loved it. It's totally unique to anything else on the album."

> **"The great thing about the original band was that when we broke up we did it without any bad blood."**
> ALICE COOPER

Speaking to *Classic Rock* a few days later, Dunaway helps flesh out the details.

"Alice wrote three songs that weekend," he remembers. "*Laughing At Me* and *Shoe Salesman* both ended up on *Easy Action* [1970]. Then there was *The Sound Of A*. It came with a whole concept. I still have two or three pages of Alice's elaborate notes about this futuristic world that the song was originally supposed to represent. But then [1969 debut] *Pretties For You* went in a whole different direction, and *The Sound Of A* fell by the wayside, like many of our songs. I'd always liked it, though and at least a decade later I decided to make a demo of it. I couldn't remember it exactly, so I filled in the blanks. The chords are generally the ones that Alice wrote. Now, after all these years, it's finally surfaced in such a grand way."

When he first wrote the song, Alice and the band were still gigging as The Nazz, taking their name from The Yardbirds song *The Nazz Is Blue*. Having moved to Los Angeles from Phoenix, Arizona, they'd secured a residency at the Cheetah, but were still nearly a year away from being 'discovered' by their first label boss, Frank Zappa.

Alice still has a vivid recollection of the Floyd as house guests. "We played with them at the Cheetah and they were doing stuff from *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*," he recalls. "I still don't know how Syd Barrett could be that high. I got up one morning and Syd is sitting in the kitchen with a box of cornflakes in front of him. He's going like this [laughing and pointing]. Apparently the cornflakes were dancing and singing. I went: 'How you doing, Syd?' And he goes: 'Shh!' He was busy watching these cornflakes in the same way that I would watch cartoons on TV.

"We had an audition that afternoon at [Hollywood nightclub] Gazzarri's, and asked the Floyd if they wanted to go along. 'Yeah, we'll come down and support you in the audience. Oh, and we made these brownies.' We ate these brownies before the gig, and the world went sideways. Sunset Strip was suddenly on a forty-five-degree angle. I fell off the stage three times, and the Floyd guys were laughing their heads off because they were so

MAIN: GETTY

Alice and Michael Bruce, live in Nashville, May 2017. Inset: Dennis Dunaway.

buzzed. I never did acid, not once. But they might have put some pretty good cannabis or hash in those brownies. We were beer drinkers, that was really our thing. We were never into heavy drugs at all, whereas they were more psychedelic than we were. Anyway, we got the job at Gazzarri's."

It transpires that the two tracks on *Paranormal* that feature the founder members in full rocking order – *Genuine American Girl* and *You And All Your Friends* – also have deep roots.

"Dennis and I had a band in New England in the late seventies called the Flying Tigers," Neal Smith explains. "And one of the things we played was a composition I wrote called *Red Blooded American Girl*. When I was searching for songs for Alice and Bob for the new album, I chose that one. They thought it had potential. The song was totally torn apart and rewritten as *Genuine American Girl*, in the true gender-bending spirit of the original Alice Cooper group."

"Then, in the early eighties, Dennis and I were writing songs together," Dunaway adds. "And he played me a great one called *In The Films Of Me And My Friends*. I loved it, we worked out an arrangement and I added some smokin' drums. When we played it for Alice and Bob earlier this year, they wanted to do an updated version but also keep the fire and excitement of the original."

Despite all the missing decades, it's remarkable to hear how singular Alice and the old band still sound when they get into a room together. The four of them lock into an intense rock'n'roll groove that has lost little of its venom since their platinum-selling heyday.

"Back then, Neal wasn't so much holding the beat down as he was a lead drummer," says Michael Bruce, attempting to nail the secret of their chemistry. "Dennis went all over the place with his basslines, Glen was the lead guitar player and I guess I held the fort down by playing these powerful rhythms. So when we were in the studio for *Paranormal*, it felt like we were brothers with a lot of past history. You might not see your family all the time, but when you get together, it's special."

This mini-reunion has now been extended to Alice's live shows. In addition to his regular band, his British tour this November will also incorporate Bruce, Dunaway and Smith. Alice isn't giving too much away just yet, but it promises to be spectacular.

"At the end of the show [spoiler alert!] with my touring band, which is probably the best band I've ever worked with, Alice kills the girl, they put him in a guillotine and cut his head off," Alice says. "The curtain comes down, then it goes back up again and suddenly it's the original band. That's like the icing on the cake. When those guys play, it's darker, heavier, slower and more powerful than the touring band. They're dangerous. And I sing differently with them."

It's instructive to note that the original band will be joining Alice only on the UK dates of his world tour. And there's a simple reason for this: "The British fans are our oldest and most loyal fans," Alice says. "Britain totally understood our sense of humour from the start, even when we'd do publicity stunts that were totally outrageous. Like when we took a lorry and a great big poster of Alice, totally naked with a big python coming out of his crotch, and installed it in Piccadilly Square [Circus] on a Friday, to make sure it stopped all the traffic. Most places would be irate, but the British public loved the fact that we would go to that much trouble [laughs]. The British people are what really launched Alice Cooper. They got it long before Americans did, so we owe them this."

Alice, Bruce, Buxton, Dunaway and Smith (and pet boa constrictor) first brought their live show to the UK when they came to London in November 1971, to coincide with the release of their fourth album, *Killer*. It was a brief introduction that involved a memorable appearance on BBC TV's *The Old Grey Whistle Test* and a headline show at the Rainbow in Finsbury Park.

"It felt like we were brothers with a lot of past history. When you get together, it's special."
MICHAEL BRUCE

"The British Invasion was the biggest influence on the Alice Cooper group," says Dunaway. "So by the time we finally went over there, we were ready to soak it all up. I once saw an interview with [Spiders From Mars bassist] Trevor Bolder, who said that David [Bowie] made the Spiders go to our Rainbow show. They'd fancied themselves as tough blues guys in Levi jeans, but David took them along specifically to prove that they could glam out and still look tough."

Meanwhile, Alice's abiding recollection of that trip serves as a morbid premonition of the gallows-humour havoc that he and the band would soon wreak on stage.

"It was the weirdest thing that ever happened to me," he says, shaking his head at the memory. "I was sitting next to a very old woman on the flight over. We were playing cards and she said [whispering]: 'I take opiate pills.' She was about ninety. I said: 'Well, that's cool. I drink beer.' Then she goes: 'Don't wake me up if they bring food, because I really gotta sleep.' So she fell asleep. But never woke up. I got off the plane and they wheeled her body off on a trolley. The person next to me dies on the plane, and that's the very first the British press ever hears about me! If I'd thought about it, I should've taken a sharpie and drawn two little circles on the side of her throat, to look like little holes. She would've thought that was funny."

Forty-six years on, Alice Cooper is still the mythical vampire of rock'n'roll, a bloodied collision of menace and high camp, a lurid flood of colour in an all too anaemic rock world. And he's in absolutely no doubt as to what makes it continue to work.

"When you hit that stage, you need to be as egotistical as you possibly can," he says. "You're a rock star – you own it. When I hit the stage as Alice, I want him to be the most arrogant bastard up there. Because that's what the audience wants him to be."

Paranormal is out now. More at: alicecooper.com, nealsmithrocks.com and dennisdunaway.com

GETTY x2

LISA HAUN/GETTY

TWIN PIQUES

From goth glory with **Gene Loves Jezebel** to a bitter split and long-lasting bad blood, twins Michael and Jay Aston look back on their time in the band – and at each other's throats.

Words: **Dave Everley**

Jay Aston can remember when Gene Loves Jezebel started to fall apart. It was around the time of their 1987 album *The House Of Dolls*, and his band had changed from spider-haired post-punks into goth-pop pin-ups. "I'd been planning to leave Gene Loves Jezebel for a while and form a band with our bassist. I was getting frustrated with how things were and how my brother was."

His identical twin Michael can remember when it unravelled, too. "That album, *The House Of Dolls*, was awful. I was in agony at how simple the songs had become, how moronic the lyrics were. I didn't want to be around that. So I left."

The story of Gene Loves Jezebel, the band who brought an explosion of vivid colour to the black-and-white palette of 1980s goth, is summed up in those two quotes. Not the literal story – that stretches back to a steel town in South Wales at the end of the 1970s and continues right up to the present day. But together they encapsulate the real story of Gene Loves Jezebel, a fraternal bond that was strained, then broken beyond repair. Today, two versions of Gene Loves Jezebel exist, one led by Jay Aston, the other by Michael, each eyeing the other with a mixture of frustration and hostility.

This was originally supposed to be an interview with Jay Aston about *Dance Underwater*, the new album from his version of Gene Loves Jezebel, their first in 14 years. But it soon became apparent that one brother's story is only half the picture. "I don't want to talk about my brother too much," says Jay, politely. The truth is, it's unavoidable.

The old notion that twins are halves of the same whole is a glib cliché, yet for all the distance that separates Jay and Michael Aston in 2017, they're more alike than not. Part of it is down to simple genetics – they look the same, sound the same, sing the same way, at least to the outsider. And for all the rancour between them, their view of what happened with Gene Loves Jezebel is the same song with a different tune.

Like so many musicians who came of age in the late 70s, Gene Loves Jezebel were outsiders. As kids in the steel town of Porthcawl, South Wales, the Astons spent much of their time fighting with the local rugby boys. "You had two options," says Jay. "You either got beat up or fought back." The Astons fought back. "Just because someone's skinny doesn't mean they can't handle themselves."

Music provided an escape: punk and post-punk, Bowie, Zeppelin. Jay loved the epic pop of the Beach Boys and Phil Spector. For Michael it was Van Morrison and Bob Dylan. They were close, though not quite as close as you might imagine.

"That's a great myth about twins," says Jay. "We weren't just hanging out with each other. We had separate friends, we were in different forms at school. He was always in steady relationships, always looking to have families and kids. I was much more of a loner."

They were outsiders when they moved to London and put together Gene Loves Jezebel at the start of the 1980s too. Michael's then wife studied at St Martin's College, and they immediately found themselves in the midst of a febrile underground movement where music intersected with art, fashion and alternative culture. With their spidery post-punk songs and equally spidery haircuts ("tarantula tops" as Jay calls them), they slotted instantly into this demi-monde, even if the Astons never quite felt comfortable being part of it.

"We very shy and quite insecure," says Michael. "It might have come over as arrogance. We'd see Robert Smith and Siouxsie Sioux in clubs, but I never felt confident enough to walk up and say: 'I love your music, I've seen you twenty-five times.'"

"We wanted to be different," says Jay. "We were looking for our own sound, our own look. There was no word for it yet."

That word – 'goth' – would come later, but their debut album, 1983's *Promise*, nonetheless pinned its dark colours to the mast of this emerging scene. Songs such as the twisted, incestuous *Upstairs* and majestic *Screaming (For Emmalene)* swirled with gloomily romantic atmosphere. The twins' near-telepathic intertwined vocals – complete with moans and birdlike cries – instantly set them apart from their contemporaries.

In early 1984, Gene Loves Jezebel flew to New York for the first time, small-town boys in the Big Apple. They played two shows at the Danceteria, the new-wave nightclub that was the chicest hangout of the mid-80s, and recorded a session with former Velvet Underground man John Cale.

> **"We wanted to be different. We were looking for our own sound, our own look. There was no word for it yet."**
>
> **Jay Aston**

The Cale session never saw the light of day, but the Astons had got a taste of America. Where British radio stations and TV shows like *The Tube* largely ignored Gene Loves Jezebel, America embraced them. "Those were the days where we used to wear a lot of make-up, silks and satins," says Jay. "And this was before we went on stage. We weren't like Bruce Springsteen, who would just turn up in jeans and a T-shirt. People would look at us and say: 'What, is it Halloween?'"

The Astons had graduated from cut-off T-shirts and 'tarantula top' haircuts to a look that was one part 80s rock star, two parts pre-Raphaelite god. Their music had changed too: *Immigrant* still swirled in its own dark space, but it looked outwards rather than inwards, flourishing silk scarves rather than staring at its feet.

1986's *Discover* drifted further towards rock's centre ground. The videos they made for the singles *Desire (Come And Get It)* and *Heartache* were glossy, pouting MTV fodder that repositioned the Astons as pin-ups: Michael, blond and shamanic; Jay, purple-haired and brooding. They inspired devotion from their fans, and strange rumours – innuendo suggested the brothers were lovers. The band would get followed when they walked down the street. "I felt like Peter Pan," Jay says. "I couldn't go anywhere without people pulling at my hair."

But for at least one twin, something was being lost in the transformation. Original guitarist Ian Hudson suffered a nervous breakdown midway through the band's first American tour. "We knew something was wrong when he tried to throw himself out of a window," Michael says drily.

Hudson was replaced by former Generation X guitarist James Stephenson, who – at least in Michael's view – brought an unwelcome shot of commercialism to the band.

"I felt around *Immigrant* that we really were a unique band and that we really had something that was our own," says Michael. "And I think we lost that and become a little bit more generic. Musically it wasn't terribly demanding."

That wasn't the only thing that was changing within Gene Loves Jezebel. According to Michael Aston, his brother was demanding to take lead vocals on more and more songs. Jay counters by saying that Michael was becoming harder to work with. Both say the other was spending less time in the studio. Tensions were starting to boil over.

"I was always trying to leave, trying to start new things," says Jay. "You have to find out who you are, you have to be brave in life. But I was constantly being pulled back in."

It was Michael who eventually walked out, during sessions for their fourth album, 1987's glossy *The House Of Dolls*, frustrated by the band's increasingly commercial sound. He eventually appeared on just a handful of the album's tracks, including the slick single *Motion Of Love*. ▷

Jay (left) and Michael (centre) with the *House Of Dolls* (1987) line-up of GLJ.

Jay Aston: back with new album *Dance Underwater*.

"Our first record has songs about having sex with your mother [*Upstairs*]," says Michael. "That was radical. We went from that to *Motion Of Love* – I can't tell you how miserable that song made me. I thought it destroyed our legacy."

Jay: "Songs like *Motion Of Love* only sound overly commercial because he had to be included on them. We had to get someone on backing vocals, even though they're not needed. He's just as responsible for the poppiness. He's being dishonest. He's just trying to be cool."

The reasons behind the initial schism between the twins were musical, but today they're re-framed as personal. "Jay had a secondary role in the band for a long time. I think he was bitter about that," says Michael. "He's my twin brother and I loved him. I said: 'Okay, you think you can do it, good luck to you.'"

"The way it worked originally was: 'Jay, you play guitar and sing, but Mike has to sing because he's got nothing else to do,' says Jay. "But it came to a point where it took a long time to get things done."

While Michael pursued his own career, first with new band Edith Grove and then with a solo album, *Why Me Why This Why Now,* Jay continued under the Gene Loves Jezebel banner. He made two more albums without his brother: 1990's *Kiss Of Life* and 1993's *Heavenly Bodies*. Both were beset by problems – the former was re-recorded at a cost of $250,000, while the latter's chances of success were scuppered when their label, Savage, went bust soon after the album was released.

The fraternal bond hadn't been completely severed, and, somewhat inevitably, the pair signed a management deal together. A reunion tour was followed by a brand new Gene Loves Jezebel album, *VII*, supposed to be the first to feature both brothers in a decade. But when it emerged in 1997, Michael was conspicuous by his absence. The old tensions had resurfaced, though the brothers have different takes on what happened.

> **"It was both of us against the world. But things happen along the way."**
>
> **Jay Aston**

"*VII* was a difficult record to make," says Jay. "We were in a position where someone wanted my brother to be on it. They were all my songs."

"They took a record that I'd made, put together for them and erased all my songs, all my vocals," says Michael. "I thought: 'I won't let you get away with this.'"

This time it was Michael who continued to use the Gene Loves Jezebel moniker. Jay sued his brother over the rights to the name. A lengthy court battle followed that eventually resulted in Jay dropping his lawsuit. But it was too late, a line had been crossed. "I fought for the Gene Loves Jezebel name because I wanted to establish what I was in Gene Loves Jezebel," says Michael. "In many ways I regret doing that. But I was so angry."

The upshot was that there were suddenly two Gene Loves Jezebels. The Michael-led version was the more proactive, releasing three albums between 1999 and 2003. Jay's, which consisted of the band's early-90s line-up, was slower out of the blocks – 2003's semi-acoustic *The Thornfield Sessions* was their sole album until this year's *Dance Underwater*.

While Michael continued to gig, Jay came close to walking away from music altogether. "I was smoking two packs of Marlboro a day, drinking too much," he says. "I'd lost interest."

He began working for Apple in London. It was a call in 2010 from a friend who had been in an early Gene Loves Jezebel line-up, asking if Jay wanted to sing on a Rolling Stones tribute album, that revived his interest in playing music. Solo gigs and an album with former bandmate Pete Rizzo under the name Ugly Buggs followed, though it would be seven years before the Gene Loves Jezebel name reappeared on an album again. "The landscape has changed so much," says Jay. "We funded this via Pledge. It's a long way from half a million dollars on an album or a couple of hundred grand on a video."

Unsurprisingly, Michael Aston's name is nowhere near *Dance Underwater.* Today the brothers' relationship sits somewhere between non-existent and outright toxic. Jay accuses Michael of attempting to block his version of the band from playing in the US and Brazil. According to Michael, they haven't spoken to each other since their father's funeral almost 10 years ago. Both agree that a reunion is out of the question.

"He's a manipulative person," says Jay. "He's all out for Michael Aston; he's not out for anyone else. If he could have done it without me, he quite happily would have. He needed my talent. And the minute he couldn't exploit me, he'd had enough."

"Even beyond the lawsuits, it's the slandering, the lies, the false narratives, the cruelty," says Michael, who has recently been working on new music with Depeche Mode producer John Fryer. "It's been mean for no reason."

Both brothers have made peace with the idea of there being two Gene Loves Jezebels in action, if not with each other. "If you've got a twin, you've an ally immediately," Jay says. "It was the both of us against the world. But things happen along the way."

Dance Underwater by Jay Aston's Gene Loves Jezebel is out now via Westworld Recordings.

Xxxxxx

RONNIE MONTROSE

The guitarist died before finishing his last album, but a host of big names ensured it was completed.

Words: **Dave Everley**

When Ronnie Montrose died on March 3, 2012 he hadn't released a new studio album in 13 years. But that didn't mean the man who revolutionised hard rock in the 70s with his band Montrose had been idle. For a decade, the guitarist had been working on an ambitious project that remained unfinished at the time of his death.

"Ronnie called me up with an idea one day: 'I'm calling the record *10x10* – ten songs, ten different singers'," says bassist Ricky Phillips, who first played with Ronnie Montrose in the 1990s. "He said: 'I'm going to call Edgar Winter, Sammy Hagar, Eric Martin…' People he knew and people he worked with."

Phillips says that laying down the basic instrumental tracks with Ronnie and drummer Eric Singer in a studio in North Hollywood was the easy part.

"We only had a few days to cut these tracks. Ronnie spent two days setting his amps up, making sure the chords were perfectly straight, the microphones were exactly the same distance from one cabinet to the next. He took two hours to go and find the proper rug he wanted. But when it came to recording the tracks, it was: blam! 'Okay, we're done, let's do the next one.' His way of looking at it was if the spirit of the song was exactly what he wanted, why do it again?"

Finding singers was a harder task. Ronnie had struggled to find the right vocalist to work with for years, so locking in 10 of them was a big ask indeed. Things were further complicated when he was diagnosed with prostate cancer in the 00s. "He came out the other side after a couple of years of not touching his guitar," says Phillips. "He and I talked and he said: 'I really want *10x10* to be finished. But he passed before we managed it."

Montrose died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound at the age of 64. He had suffered from depression for many years. "Ronnie was a very up, happy guy. Most people would scratch their heads and go: 'Ronnie? Depressed? No, there's no way.' But that's why he did what he did. If he'd have just gotten through that day or that night, these things might have passed."

Six vocals had been finished by the time of Montrose's death, and Phillips willingly took on the task of finishing *10x10*, bringing in the remaining singers and an equally stellar array of guitarists to complete the unfinished guitar work. The million-dollar cast includes Hagar, Martin, Winter, Glenn Hughes, Mark Farner and Gamma singer Davey Pattison on vocals, while other guitarists on the album include Joe Bonamassa, Aerosmith's Brad Whitford, Steve Lukather of Toto and Def Leppard's Phil Collen.

> **"Everybody came on board – they knew the stuff was good. Ronnie is held in high regard."**
> **Ricky Phillips**

"Everybody came on board – they knew the stuff was good. Ronnie is held in high regard," says Phillips. "They wanted to see his last work finished."

10x10 stands as a fitting legacy for someone who was hugely acclaimed by his fellow musicians, although Phillips acknowledges that Montrose never truly had the commercial success he deserved.

"I never heard him talk about being disappointed that he wasn't more successful or better known, but I could tell he was," says Phillips. "That's why Eric and I tried to do everything we could to clear our plates for Ronnie. We felt he wasn't getting what he was due.

"Ronnie was odd and quirky and crazy and wonderful."

Montrose's 10x10 will be released later this year via Warners.

GETTY

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ARTHUR BROWN

The future looks bleak. Money isn't everything. Embrace getting older. Simple pleasures are the best. There is no god of hellfire. These things and more shape the *real* God Of Hellfire's world view.

Interview: **Dave Ling**

Known as the God Of Hellfire, he's the yurt-dwelling nudist singer whose 1968 classic *Fire* – memorably performed on *Top Of The Pops* with a face-painted and robed Brown wearing a flaming helmet on his head (no Health & Safety killjoys spoiling the fun in those days) – topped the UK singles chart and compelled Jimi Hendrix to try to form a band with him.

THINK WITH YOUR HEART, NOT YOUR HEAD

Too much head-thinking has got us into the mess we find ourselves in now. Society is screwed up to the point of being unfixable. If it were up to me, I'd dismantle all of its structures and we would start over again.

THE FUTURE LOOKS BLEAK

Man evolved through the animals, and the human mind was a great tool that allowed us to survive. Mankind has separated itself from nature, and some people are even rejecting the science that states the reasons for remaining part of nature. It's all because of capitalistic and economic reasons.

To start over again we would need to teach harmony. The competitive view of how humans should conduct themselves must go. It's not about being the best; we should be asking how the world can be made fit for human beings and all of the other creatures. War is everywhere and it's hard to see an end to it all.

THERE IS NO GOD OF HELLFIRE

It's getting to the point where I respect anyone who has a religious belief, though what we really need is something that doesn't pit people against each other. We need a fresh look at pretty much everything in society.

MUSIC ALWAYS CAME FIRST FOR ME

I moved to Paris in 1966 and spent some time involving myself in the theatre. In the following decade I played The Priest in The Who's rock opera *Tommy*. The theatre is great. I really loved the idea of creating an alternative universe through the medium of words. I found that astounding. But at the same time, music was such a direct and mysterious language that I didn't seriously consider becoming an actor. Looking back, I'm happy with the path I've taken.

THE ART OF SHOWMANSHIP IN ROCK IS DYING

There are a handful of brilliant performers that have great ideas but they're not yet being represented in mass culture. There are so many images on TV or the internet that it's hard to do what Henry Moore [abstract sculptor and artist, 1898-1986] or the modern artists did – to disturb us with something new. In some ways I think we've become unshockable.

ACCIDENTS WILL HAPPEN – GET USED TO IT

My stage trademark is the flaming headdress, which I wear while singing my number-one hit *Fire* [released in 1968]. Of course, from time to time things go wrong. At the Windsor Festival [in '67] I had an assistant who was a pyromaniac. Instead of half-filling the fuel dish, he took it right to the top. My head caught fire. The guy didn't know what to do so he smacked me on the back and the fuel spilled everywhere. He was running around with his arm on fire, and the flames had to be extinguished by a pint of beer from an audience member. Coming off stage, I had no fire and I was soaking wet. I looked like a drowning raccoon. Over the years I've met a number of people who claim to have thrown that drink over me.

HENDRIX DIDN'T REALLY THROW ME OFF A TOUR

What really happened was that Kit Lambert and Chris Stamp [founders of Track Records, Brown and Hendrix's label at the time] put me up to support him before I was nationally famous. They showed him some photos of me with my make-up and helmet on and Jimi said: "I'm not going on after that."' But the two of us did lots of festivals together, and one of the reasons that *Fire* became a hit was that he took it around the black radio stations in America. Later on we formed a band together. Phew, that was a big undertaking. And it didn't last for long. Jimi wanted tapes of Wagner in the background and to use huge projection screens, with me out at the front. His idea was to combine Vincent Crane, my keyboard player, and myself with the Experience. But Vince wasn't terribly keen [laughs]. Back then Jimi wasn't the revolutionary figure we know him as now – he was just a guy who'd had some hits. But then Vince ended up in a mental home anyway.

> **"Jimi's idea was to combine my keyboard player and myself with the Experience."**

MONEY ISN'T EVERYTHING

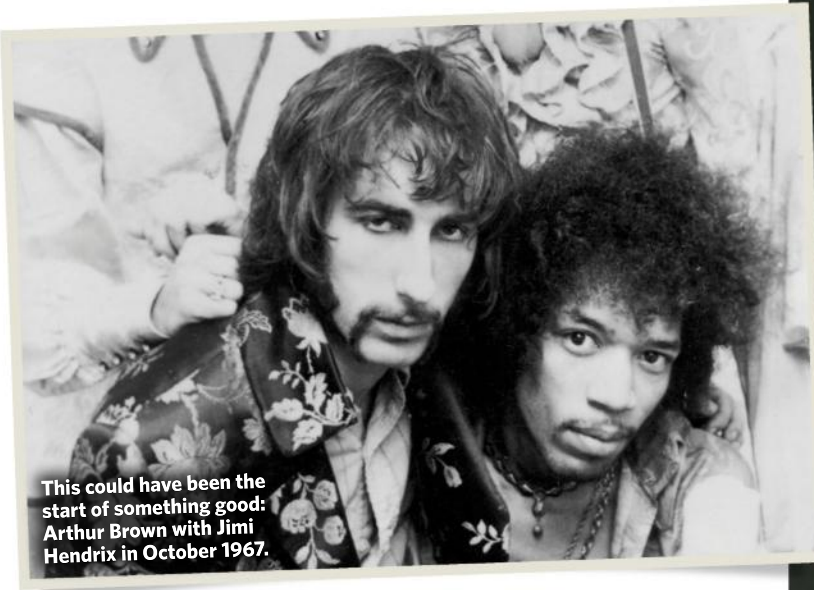
After *Fire* became a hit, I turned down a £750,000 deal with CBS Records on the grounds that The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown already had a contract with Lambert and Stamp [at Track Records]. Carl Palmer and Vincent Crane weren't too happy about that, but I did what I did out of loyalty. A deal is a deal.

I live a frugal life. I haven't got lots of money. Up until a year ago I lived in a yurt [a portable circular tent], and now I'm in a huge reconditioned barn. I've lived in big mansions, also in an asbestos prefab that was given to me as a flat by the local council. I'm the kind of guy who makes himself happy wherever he lives. I've lived through wars in the middle of Africa. Variety is the spice of life.

THE HUMAN BODY IS A BEAUTIFUL THING

I've performed concerts naked. I was arrested and deported after removing my clothes at the Palermo Pop Festival in Italy [1970], but I don't ➢

ALAMY



This could have been the start of something good: Arthur Brown with Jimi Hendrix in October 1967.

The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown set London's Marquee club alight circa 1968.

understand the fuss over nudity. If you spend time with naked people, you soon get used to the fact that people are fat and thin, big and small, young or old, or whether somebody is gorgeous or perhaps a bit creased. We spend our lives being told that the human body is naughty when really we should be celebrating its beauty.

We are becoming far too politically correct. When I stripped off and sang at the Marquee club in the centre of London, nobody minded. Now I would be on the front page of a newspaper. What was I saying about people being unshockable? Maybe I should take that back.

HEALTHY MIND, HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

I've just turned seventy-five years old but I like to think I'm in pretty good shape. I prefer meditation over drugs. I made that choice in around 1974. Until then I quite enjoyed acid. I've no need for drink or drugs.

One of the secrets is tao oil. You take butter and melt it over and over again until all of the dairy elements are gone. The oil is an incredible anti-ageing ingredient. And each day I do a forty-five-minute program of physical exercise and yoga. Meditation helps to keep the mind flexible. As the body gets older, so the demands grow. The more you can let go of all of that, the happier your body becomes.

Singing is incredibly good for the soul. We used to sing on building sites and at the morning assembly at school. It had a direct, positive effect on the mind and body. To me, one of the worst things to happen to our civilisation was when everybody stopped singing. I recommend knee-wobble dances for all of the politicians.

> **"One day my father said: 'Son, I'm having an affair with an extraterrestrial.'"**

I BELIEVE IN ALIEN LIFE – AND THEY'RE FRIENDLY!

One day my father came to me and said: "Son, I need to tell you something important." When he prefaced it by saying: "Some people talk about extramarital affairs…" I wondered what he was about to reveal. I was very unprepared for what was to follow. "Son," he told me, "I'm having an affair with an extraterrestrial – a woman from another planet. And let me tell you, the physical element is just the same as it is down here on earth." That has rather coloured my wish to someday meet an alien.

WE SHOULD EMBRACE GETTING OLDER

We've no choice in the matter. I'm very comfortable in my own skin. That's probably because I don't believe in the things people insist are bound to happen as we age. I have a nice young partner and I can still do most of the things I used to. As for the things I've had to leave behind, I don't really miss them.

NOBODY LIVES FOREVER

Death comes to us all. I lost a lot of good friends over the last couple of years. It's sad that I'll never see them again, but I prefer to look at the time spent together as a gift than to become maudlin.

THE MUSIC BUSINESS IS CHANGING – GET USED TO IT

In my day there was no way of making music without a record company being involved. That's no longer the case. What we find now is that it's so easy to make a record that it's become tougher to make money at it. I used PledgeMusic to release my album *Zim Zam Zim* [2014], and I was of the first artists to embrace the internet. What used to be has reached an end, and now we're rebirthing. A couple of years ago I spoke to Jimmy Page, who told me he'd been doing no gigs and was spending time working on his website. The power is returning to the hands of the artist, and I like that.

SIMPLE PLEASURES ARE THE BEST

I like to take long walks in the hills. I like dancing. I love tennis and I follow as many of Andy Murray's games as possible. I also enjoy watching football. Many years ago I used to live in Leeds and supported Leeds United, but when I came back to England from living in America, they'd disappeared down to the Third Division, so I've adopted Manchester United as my team. I know it's frowned upon to swap teams but, well… I'm from the north [Brown was born in Whitby, Yorkshire].

Still one of rock's most colourful characters: Brown performing at the Lunar Festival in Solihull in 2014.

I HAVE NO PLANS TO RETIRE

I'll keep on going till the end. I always tell audiences: "Come and see me again soon before I die on stage." Making music is what keeps me happy, though what form it will take, I cannot predict. When Pablo Casals, the classical cello player [who died in 1973], decided to call it day, he went and lived at the top of a mountain and would only play for anybody who took the trouble to go and climb up it. I really like that idea. ❶

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Shoot to Thrill

Triggerfinger might be "crazy old men in suits" who can't get arrested in Britain, but the Belgian group's brand of wide-ranging alt.blues rock has seen them sword-fight with the Stones, soundtrack a heavyweight boxing match and fill the Foo Fighters' shoes.

Words: **Henry Yates**

Imagine yourself at a rock festival and news circulates that the Foo Fighters won't be playing tonight because Dave Grohl has taken a swan dive off the stage in Gothenburg. But not to worry, because their slot will filled by a bunch of greying Belgians called Triggerfinger. If that happened in the UK there would likely be a riot, or at least a flurry of requests for a refund. But it's a measure of how loved Triggerfinger are in mainland Europe that just such a shuffle at Holland's Pinkpop in 2015 was accepted, maybe even welcomed. "And it was a fantastic show, by the way," Triggerfinger drummer Mario Goossens says with a grin.

Some bands are enormous, full stop. Others expand and contract, depending on the time zone. For example, it's fair to say that the title of Triggerfinger's fifth album, *Colossus*, is wholly fitting in Belgium or Holland, where notching up platinum sales (20,000 and 40,000 respectively) and playing 8,000-capacity venues are par for the course. Yet in Britain – despite a shop-window support at the Stones' Hyde Park show in 2013 – they don't mean much at all.

But then Triggerfinger never expected a lot. Goossens, frontman Ruben Block and bassist Paul Van Bruystegem set out in Antwerp circa 1998 with the modest ambition to simply "play music" of an alt.blues-rock persuasion that none of them seem keen to pin down today. Goossens throws out Howlin' Wolf, Black Sabbath, Roxy Music, Nick Cave and, perhaps most pertinently, Queens Of The Stone Age. Block won't give us a name. "It's endless," he says. "It ranges from folk to pop to rock, blues, soul, hip-hop, metal… you name it."

And play music they did, in every grot-hole and ill-advised restaurant that would have them.

When they toured supporting symphonic metallers Within Temptation, the mismatch meant every night was a battle.

"We'd go on stage with our suits and people would be looking at us, like: 'Who are these crazy old men?' Because we're all a bit grey," Goossens says. "One gig in Norway, this girl had her middle finger up the whole time – 'Fuck off!' But I have to say, five minutes into the set they were all digging it. We went back two weeks later and she was there, same girl, stood in front of us, enjoying the whole set."

"Luckily we're in a band where we're louder than the audience," says Block. "We have enough amps, and we turn them up."

A self-titled debut album in 2004 didn't do much, and nor did 2008's *What Grabs Ya*. But 2010's *All This Dancin' Around* achieved platinum sales, and two years later the fuse was lit by their cover of Lykke Li's *I Follow Rivers*, which reached No.1 in six countries. That's when the 'pinch yourself' moments began.

"When we supported the Stones," says Goossens, "I remember seeing Keith Richards and Ronnie Wood, like, playing *Pirates Of The Caribbean*. They had these wooden swords, like, 'Whoargh!' Seventy years old and still kids, y'know?"

More surreal still was performing in the ring before the 2012 heavyweight boxing title fight between Wladimir Klitschko and Tony Thompson.

"After *I Follow Rivers*, Universal got us this gig playing for Klitschko when he came into the ring," Goossens explains. "It was broadcast in a hundred and fifty countries or something."

A combined 30 million streams of *I Follow Rivers* on Spotify and YouTube have played a part in helping Triggerfinger spread their wings.

"Tokyo was strange, in a wonderful way," says Block. "It's like you're in a mad, twitching, flickering movie, and the fans hit it full-on. Some of them even had these little choreographies they were doing in front of the stage. They hadn't seen us before – nobody had – but they were willing to dig in and join us. And our last big tour in Canada was amazing. We drove from Toronto to Vancouver and all the way back. That's like driving from Antwerp to Afghanistan and back. Insane."

"It's a cool challenge to play for an audience that doesn't know you, and win them over."
Ruben Block

All these things certainly opened doors, but it would be a shame if *I Follow Rivers* remained the only Triggerfinger track that most people know. There is far better on *Colossus*, from the fuzzy, stompy, Josh Homme-flavoured *Upstairs Box* to the creepy, Bowie-esque *Afterglow*.

As well as recording with producer Mitchell Froom and engineer Tchad Blake in Santa Monica and Wales, Block says the other key departure on this fifth album was relaxing the concept that every song had to be played live and simply following the muse.

"If you listen to *Colossus*, it's really open," he stresses. "We invited a lot of influences and vibes, and we didn't limit ourselves. We said: 'We have to make some cool shit. Let's see what we can come up with. On *Colossus*, if we were thinking about hitting a kettle, we did.

"We actually ended up using a lot of demos on the final record. There are vocal takes that were done here in Belgium that sound a bit grainy, but the atmosphere was great and you could feel a real tension, so we used it."

Could *Colossus* be the album that finally breaks Triggerfinger in the UK? With a new album that contains their strongest tunes to date, and the marketing muscle of their new label, Mascot, it's certainly their best shot.

"There are downsides and upsides that we're not as big in the UK," explains Block. "I imagine for some bands it's hard to go back to smaller clubs. But for us it's a cool challenge to play for an audience that doesn't know you, and win them over. It keeps you sharp."

Colossus is out on August 25 via Mascot Label Group. Triggerfinger tour the UK in October.

DIEGO FRANSSENS/PRESS

Sister Ray,
Berwick St,
Soho, London

CHEAP THRILLS

THE £50 RECORD STORE CHALLENGE

Steven Wilson

Words: **Polly Glass** Portraits: **Will Ireland**

It's difficult to find a record that Steven Wilson doesn't already have. Not that he isn't up for trying, mind you. Headphones wrapped around his neck, bespectacled eyes a bit like those of a hawk in hunting mode, he flicks through an enormous stack of Neil Young records, muttering, "Got it, got it…" He moves on to ELO (with the same result), bringing to mind his new album, *To The Bone*, which draws a lot of inspiration from the progressive pop greats.

"People appreciate good pop," says Sister Ray owner Phil Barton, smiling. "It's genius. ABBA's been flying off the shelves lately."

Wilson stops suddenly. "There's ABBA in here?!" he asks, genuinely delighted, and darts over to the 'A' stacks. "I don't have them on vinyl. Maybe I should change that…"

An articulate, thoughtful 49-year-old trapped in a small, skinny teenager's body, Steven Wilson is just as gloriously nerdy in the flesh as you'd hope – if you've followed his career from Porcupine Tree, No-Man and Blackfield through myriad other projects, production/remix credits and, most recently, solo records.

"Yeah, I'm super-nerd," he affirms amicably, as we ask about his vinyl-cataloguing habits. "Alphabetical, chronological within alphabetical. I know some people do genres, but then there's always an album where you can't decide whether it's this or that.

His Soho trawl with *Classic Rock* today begins with focused electronica browsing ("I'm one of the world's biggest Richard D. James/Aphex Twin fans") but includes punk, soul, jazz, classic rock, Tarantino soundtracks and much more. And he seems to have an encyclopedic knowledge of all of them.

> "I don't have ABBA on vinyl. Maybe I should change that."

Wilson's diverse musical taste began with his parents' record collection while he was growing up in Hemel Hempstead. LPs by Donna Summer, ABBA and The Carpenters sat easily alongside *Dark Side Of The Moon* and *Tubular Bells*.

There are two main 'versions' of Steven Wilson commonly referenced by the rock cognoscenti. There's Steven Wilson the modern-day prog darling, who's mixed/5.1-ed just about every respected progressive act alive (Jethro Tull, Yes, King Crimson, Steve Hackett, Anathema, Opeth, Marillion…), and whose third album *The Raven That Refused To Sing (And Other Stories)* was something of a love letter to the prog classics. For others there's Steven Wilson the frontman of now defunct alternative rock band Porcupine Tree.

But then there's the third, more nuanced Steven Wilson: the guy who'll sing the praises of obscure, gnarly industrial groups in the same breath as Black Sabbath, Prince, the Damned, NWOBHM, Frank Sinatra… all of which, to greater or lesser extents, has fed into his music over the years.

"There's definitely a sort of 'noise' aesthetic in some of my music, I think," he muses. "I hope all that stuff comes through."

Scanning racks of Motörhead, Iron Maiden and Saxon records, he recalls his secondary school days spent listening to NWOBHM. "I loved it. Diamond Head were my favourite band when I was about twelve or thirteen. And the first Iron Maiden album I loved."

I'll ABBA some of that: Wilson gets into the head-down, no-nonsense, vinyl-shopping groove.

His eyes move to the Industrial stacks, settling on 70s/80s noise pioneers Throbbing Gristle, who sang about such things as rape, torture and Moors murderers Ian Brady and Myra Hindley.

"That's another of my favourite bands," he enthuses. "*The Second Annual Report* is their first album. It's the one I bought first and the hairs just stood up on the back of my neck. I remember soon after I met [Opeth frontman] Mikael Åkerfeldt, he was trying to get me into all the Swedish death metal like Bathory and At The Gates. He plays this stuff and says: 'This is really evil and sick!' And I say: 'Listen to this…' and put on *The Second Annual Report*. And he goes: 'Oh yeah, that's *really* sick.'"

There's a parallel here with Wilson's own darker creations. *Rader II*, on second solo album *Grace For Drowning*, is a chilling riff on the life of American serial killer Dennis Rader, while Porcupine Tree's *In Absentia* reportedly drew from British serial killer Fred West. Admittedly, Wilson's new album *To The Bone* isn't like this, but it's still very focused on real life – hinting at themes including social disenchantment, growing older and parenthood.

"I write songs that are very much about the world as I see it," he says. "So I don't write about space travel or hobbits. I've always written about life, relationships and things that resonate with me emotionally."

And then of course there's the music Wilson has released under pseudonyms, much of it without any lyrics at all. Nineties ambient/drone project Bass Communion was one, but there are others under names that nobody knows are actually him.

"Yeah. And I'm not going to tell you, so don't ask," he pre-empts, sipping lime and soda in a quiet bar off Oxford Street, post-shopping. "But here's the thing. I might do this weird album and release it under a pseudonym, and I know it's not going to sell over a hundred copies, because the music industry works on brand names. There are artists that we like, we buy everything that artist ▷

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> "I loved NWOBHM. Diamond Head were my favourite band when I was about twelve or thirteen."

does, sometimes we buy records that we end up not liking that much, but we still buy the next one because we've already invested.

"So brand is everything. There is that weight of expectation from your fans, management, record company… and I think sometimes it's fun to release something without those expectations."

One of the things people do expect from Steven Wilson is production control-freakery. He produced all his previous solo records alone (apart from *The Raven*, which had Alan Parsons as associate producer), and he's gravitated towards a more composer-like role, employing virtuoso players to do the instrumental heavy lifting. On his new album he played much of the guitar, keyboards and bass himself, and brought in a co-producer – the jazz-rooted production/session heavyweight Paul Stacey, whose CV includes the Black Crowes, Oasis and Madonna. Having a partner in crime, and returning to more of a guitar-player role, was liberating.

"There's nothing he couldn't say to me, or I couldn't say to him. The last thing you want is a producer who's afraid to be honest with you. And Paul's reference points are nothing to do with genre. He's done everything, so he has all that in his musical vocabulary."

If most of *To The Bone* is pop with a small, tastefully progressive 'p', then *Permanating* – Wilson's first proper pop song – is the rampantly upper-case, ELO-on-happy-pills version. He says he hasn't read the YouTube comments (unsurprisingly they're quite extreme), but welcomes the feather-ruffling.

"The most important thing for me with this record is that I feel I've done something different," he says seriously. "That is what I admire in your Princes, Bowies and people like Miles Davis and Frank Zappa – that constant sense that they were evolving. I revel in upsetting people. I don't mean that in a callous way, but if I'm upsetting people, I think that's great because that means I'm confronting their expectations."

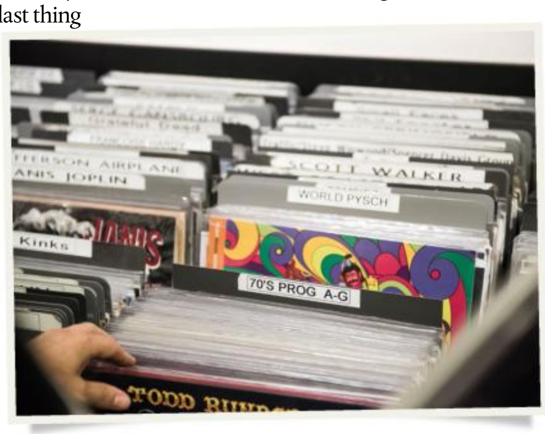
Something else that's different with his new album is that Wilson has put his own face on the cover and the publicity material – topless and slightly Bowie-esque on the former, splattered in paint on the latter. After years of weirder, conceptual campaigns, this makes quite a change in tone.

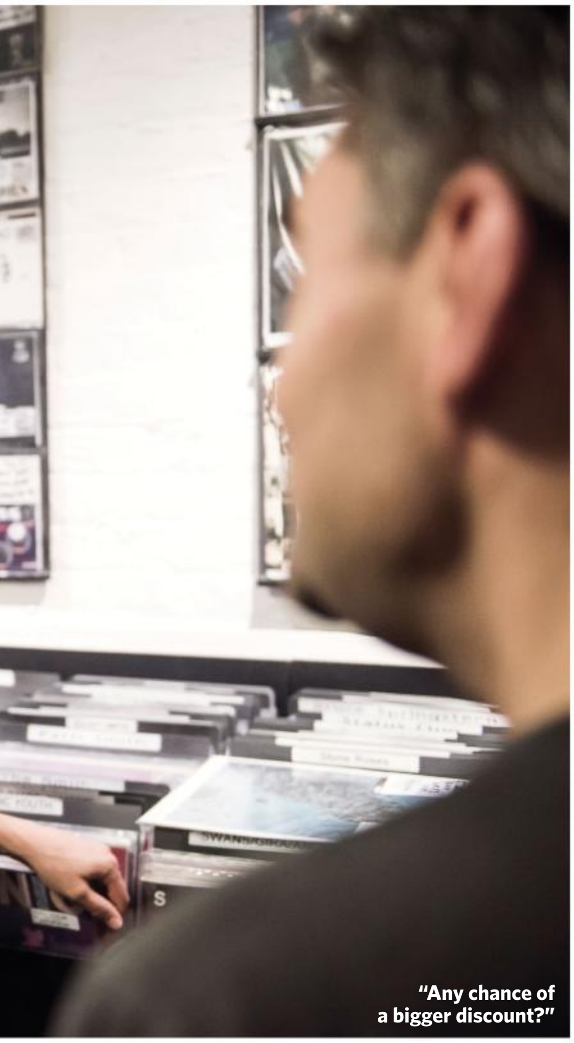
"I love the notion of the iconic pop star, not that I'm trying to rebrand myself as a pop star necessarily. But I am trying, I guess, to acknowledge to myself and my fan base that there is a strong personality behind the music."

In a wider sense, Wilson hides a lot more than most. He lives in Hemel Hempstead, has a partner, a small dog and a fondness for White Russians ("I like to think The Dude in *The Big Lebowski* made it more of a male thing"), but otherwise his private life remains under wraps. He doesn't post personal pictures online, with the exception of a recent Father's Day snap of his late father. He uses social media only in a professional capacity. All of which hasn't prevented him from selling out London's Royal Albert Hall multiple times, or hitting the UK Top 20 with previous album *Hand.Cannot.Erase.* In fact maybe it's helped, keeping the mystery alive.

"Prince was incredibly reclusive and shy," he says. "Morrissey is another example. When they walk on stage they finally are able to be themselves and connect with other people. It's almost like they need to feel the love of an audience."

Would you put yourself in that category? "Not to the extent of those guys. Those guys were





"Any chance of a bigger discount?"

fucked up. I'm not that fucked up. But these days when I walk on stage, I know that the audience are on my side. It helps a lot, because you know there's a certain passion for the music. I'm sure that's what Prince and Morrissey felt too. These little shy guys walk on stage and suddenly everyone adores them, and you think: 'I can be a pop star, the other me – I can be that person inside of me.' I think there's a little bit of that going on with me."

Although Wilson has done so much, there's still plenty more he'd like to do, including work with Kate Bush, soundtrack a film (preferably something along the lines of the dreamy *Under The Skin* or *Mulholland Drive*), remix ABBA… For now, though, he'll make do with another huge tour, once again employing the immersive visuals created by animation whizz/video collaborator Jess Cope.

"I think it's going to be amazing," he says. "I hope there'll be people with their mouths open."

It will be a gear change compared to his previous two solo tours, which had fans weeping (in a good way) at moments of emotional heft. Not that there won't be any older material this time – fan favourites such as *The Raven*'s stirring, spine-tingling title track will most likely be part of the set.

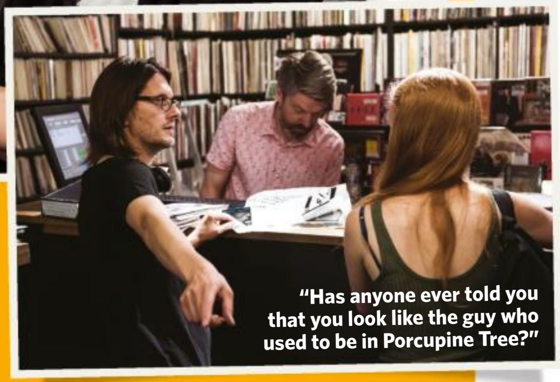
"I think that's one of the best songs I've ever written," he says. "It's one of those where I think: 'How the fuck did I do that?' So there'll still be a chance for people to weep into their alcoholic beverage of choice."

To The Bone is released on August 18 via Caroline International. Steven Wilson's UK tour runs from March 15 until April 1 2018.

CHECKOUT

WITH £50 OF *CLASSIC ROCK*'S MONEY BURNING A HOLE IN HIS POCKET, HERE'S HOW STEVEN WILSON SPENT IT.

"Did you honestly think I wouldn't go over budget?" Wilson deadpans as we approach the checkout laden down with vinyl (whittled down from a long list). He ends up buying an extra record out of his own pocket. "I've tried not to be too predictable, though, and to try new things."



"Has anyone ever told you that you look like the guy who used to be in Porcupine Tree?"

***Sister* by Sonic Youth**
"I have this reputation as someone that values very high production standards, very cinematic-sounding records. And I do love that, but at the same time I love lo-fi. Sonic Youth are amazing because they're a rock band who also manage to sound like avant-garde experimental musicians."

***Only The Lonely* by Frank Sinatra**
"Many people claim that Frank Sinatra is the grandfather of the concept album, because from the forties he was making albums of themed songs. And this album is a good example. It has this very melancholic theme, which of course appeals to me… It's difficult to imagine a better singer that the world of popular music has ever thrown up."

***Morning/Evening* by Four Tet**
"I do know a bit about this guy, Kieran Hebden. This is a fairly recent release, so I'm curious. And Robin [Wilson's publicist] has pointed out that one track is twenty minutes long, so of course that instantly gets my attention."

***Cigarettes After Sex* by Cigarettes After Sex**
"I saw somebody compare them to [slowcore group] Red House Painters, who are one of my favourite bands. So I went online and listened to one of their tracks. It was so beautiful, and the guy has a very androgynous, almost asexual voice. It's heartbreaking music, but with really interesting, almost kitchen-sink-type lyrics."

***Aescoba EP* by Brainwaltzera**
"In the store there was a sticker on this record saying: 'Rumoured to be Richard D. James, Aphex Twin'. And that was good enough for me, because he's done this before. I've been following him since the early nineties. He's fascinating because he just doesn't give a fuck, and I love people that don't give a fuck."

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The Progressive Music Awards are back for 2017. Prog's biggest night of the year will take place on September 14 at London's prestigious Underglobe.

This year **Opeth** lead the charge with four nominations. And there are also nominations for **Pink Floyd**, Marillion, **Big Big Train**, Dream Theater, **Roger Waters**, Steve Hackett, **Rush**, Yes, **Anathema**, King Crimson, **Hawkwind**, Alan Parsons Project, **VdGG** and more...

So who will you vote for this year?

Make sure you have your say when you cast your vote at

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GETTY

THE HARD STUFF ALBUMS

Queens Of The Stone Age

Villains MATADOR

Josh Homme and co's seventh sets out to dance away the political heartbreak.

There's Acid-Faced Jake, who *'likes those dancing straight boys, make his pupils dilate'*. Evil Ol' Scratch is a real low-life, the kind of guy that drinks water from the gutter. Skinny is the fool of the gang, *'knowing nothing about nothing is a blessing, in fact'*. And you'd best watch K Dub, he'll *'give a metal blow job, the middle finger 'n' split'*, apparently. And that's just the scoundrels inhabiting *Un-Reborn Again*, an ultra-sleazy *Telegram Sam* roll-calling a host of unsavoury scumbags. Elsewhere there are predatory ghouls, cruel despots and hedonistic outcasts who can't say no to a crafty shot of Kool-Aid. It's a ragged crew of villains that lurk within the rock caverns of Queens Of The Stone Age's seventh album. And my, have they come to party.

Yes, after two decades of burning witches, praising the Mojave sun and worshipping at an altar made of beer empties and licked-clean baggies, Josh Homme is finally dancing with his devils. The man who set the elemental and tempestuous tone of 21st-century rock music over six albums is cutting loose and indulging his love of throwing shapes to uptown funk.

Having worked with James Lavelle on 2013's brilliantly brooding *…Like Clockwork*, Homme has ventured even further into the pop swamp for *Villains*, bringing in producer Mark Ronson (Amy Winehouse, Bruno Mars, Lady Gaga) to help channel the grab-the-moment drive he found in the wake of the terrorist attack on a gig by his other band Eagles Of Death Metal at the Bataclan in 2015. He was absent on the night of the attack, but on stage for the Paris show EODM played three months later. "It affected the way I did everything," he told *Rolling Stone*. "It reinforced that you shouldn't wait to do something or you'll fucking regret it. Move now."

Homme moves quickly. After a brief swell of ominous Pink Floyd atmospherics hinting at a far more villainous record than he has actually made, the disco funk beat of *Feet Don't Fail Me* kicks in, albeit a disco carved into the tortured landscape of *Zabriskie Point*. An autobiographical groover tracing Homme's earliest awakenings to

the joys of dancing and how he's dancing away the woes of the world today, it's the most upbeat and seductive QOTSA album opener since *Feelgood Hit Of The Summer* from 2000's *Rated R* and it sets a hot-stepping tone. The lusty *The Way You Used To Do* is a rump-shaking glam jive seemingly played on electric fences, and *Domesticated Animals* is all gritty future blues. It says much about the level of global pessimism in 2017, and Homme's counter-culture kudos, that he makes a dancefloor rock record sound like the ultimate in societal rebellion.

There's a sincere wish to emulate Beck, T.Rex, Chic or even Franz Ferdinand here, but Homme's magnetic draw to the art-house left-field can't be resisted. To wit, Bowie's ghost possesses *Villains* regularly. Seventies Berlin synths and Robert Fripp guitar wonks creep into *Feet Don't Fail Me*, and before you know it Homme is in full wuzza-wuzza mode, cranking out his very own *Fame*. On *Domesticated Animals* he throws out operatic Thin White Duke wails over a voodoo groove. *Un-Reborn Again* – a tribute to the individualistic freedoms of youth in the form of Acid-Faced Jake, K Dub and the gang – morphs over almost seven minutes from Kraftwerk doing *Telegram Sam* to *Ashes To Ashes*, a snippet of chamber orchestra akin to ELO's *10538 Overture* and a horn-blasted *Diamond Dogs* boogie glam climax. No wonder it's full of such sordid and salacious characters. Likewise the ragged three-minute new-wave punk rampage *Head Like A Haunted House*, a rabid B-52s, Costello, Stooges and *The Rocky Horror Show* mash-up that is presumably a side-effect of Homme working with Iggy Pop on his acclaimed 2016 album *Post Pop Depression*.

Homme's villains are largely cartoonish rather than authentically sinister, believably evil. Take the camp Candyman who stalks the electro-noir track *Hideaway*: *'Speak my name and I'll appear,'* Homme lilts over the sort of seditious robo romance you'd imagine Lennon might be making today.

Homme considers QOTSA to be a politics-free escape from the modern world, so his references to the Bataclan attack and its causes and consequences are opaque but still present. *Fortress* comes across as a sci-fi ballad offering comfort and solace to a trouble-besieged friend – *'If ever your fortress caves, you're always safe in mine'* – but the most revealing line declares *'Everyone faces darkness on their own/As I have done, so will you'*. More blatantly, the sly slink of *Domesticated Animals* (that'll be us, then) disguises a lyric about political suppression in which some dystopian overlord demands their underlings hand over their gold, sends parades of shrunken heads through town and cackles: *'Kneel and bow, where's your revolution now?'* It's trickier to sing 'Oh Jeremy Corbyn' to it, but the intent is similar.

'Josh Homme is indulging his love of throwing shapes to uptown funk.'

Villains, this deep and danceable delight, ends with two searing six-minute tracks: the razor-blade blues of the White Stripes-ish *The Evil Has Landed*, and a sunrise-of-the-ancients pop finalé called *Villains Of Circumstance*. These are songs that refuse to be crushed, rounding off a disco-rock album determined that the villains won't win. Bowie's gone, it says. Trump is here. Move. Now.

Mark Beaumont

Dead Heavens

Whatever Witch You Are

DINE ALONE

Where's Walter? He's in the garage…

Some bands form with the focus on fame and fortune; others come together purely because they're having a brilliant time, and don't really care how they're received. From the sound of *Whatever Witch You Are*, Dead Heavens fall firmly into the latter category.

Fronted by Walter Schreifels of NY punks Gorilla Biscuits, post-hardcore shining stars Quicksand and mega-melodic rockers Rival Schools, Dead Heavens sound genuinely unlike any of his previous projects, focusing instead on a 60s garage-rock vibe with a big old dollop of scuzz-blues on the side. The spirit of the Stooges runs rampant in the loose, gritty *Away From The Speed*, wisps of psychedelia float on the breeze at regular intervals, the sprawling *Gold Tooth* spins out into a lovely wig-out jam, while the meditative *Experience* brings things to a warm and fuzzy close. A spellbinding affair.

Emma Johnston

Sasquatch

Maneuvers MAD OAK

Hairy and scary.

The fifth album from these LA tree-trunk thumpers finds them with a new drummer (Roadsaw frontman Craig Riggs), but apart from the line-up change their mission remains steadfast and resolute: to overwhelm and consume you with a towering wall of shimmering, buzzing, majestic fuzz, an almost-religious drone of thrumming electricity that sounds like the earth itself bleeding its guts out. Listeners with a limited scope on what the universe has to offer may dismiss this hunk of blistering decadence as 'stoner rock', but you know better, man.

Sasquatch's most formidable weapon is frontman Keith Gibbs, a true gunslinger, effortlessly swaggering, guitar and voice like blades sinking into flesh, the ghost of all your dead heroes returned and driving a gas-belching boogie van hammered together with used leather and wah-wah pedals and bits of wisdom gleaned from chipped teeth and lost highways. The absolute killer here is *Rational Woman*. Any fool could see that. It's a monster with a throbbing riff and the same sort of faraway stare that fuelled Soundgarden's gnarliest epics, but there's plenty more where that came from.

Pure muscle.

Sleazegrinder

Europe

The Final Countdown – Live At The Roundhouse

HELL & BACK

A celebration that works only partially.

Last autumn, Europe marked the 30th anniversary of breakthrough album *The Final Countdown* by playing it in full at a show in London. This is the result.

What comes across is that while the audience clearly gets off on hearing the whole record, somehow it all falls flat. For one thing the band aren't fully convincing, and for another there are too many fillers on the original album.

Oddly, what works better is when they precede this by performing the whole of 2015 album *War Of Kings*. This has real passion, proving that Europe have more to offer in the present than as a nostalgia act. But then that's what they've been telling us for years.

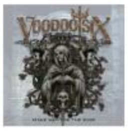
Malcom Dome

Voodoo Six

Make Way For The King

CADIZ MUSIC

The Six return at their best.



Just when everyone appeared to have given up hope that Voodoo Six would ever fulfil their obvious potential, they go and release *Make Way For The King*, on which the British band are at the top of their game, combining an Aerosmith groove with the twin-guitar grit of Thin Lizzy and the melodic infatuations of Thunder.

Listening to the aplomb of *Let Me Walk* or the kick-in-the-groin attitude of *Falling Apart*, it's obvious they're out to prove that the naysayers have got it wrong. The earthy virtuosity of guitarists Matt Pearce and Craig Price complements Nik Taylor-Stoakes, who has an erudite Roger Chapman-like timbre to his voice, and overall the Voodoo do what they do so well.

Malcolm Dome

The Cadillac Three

Legacy *BIG MACHINE LABEL GROUP*

More songs about booze, good times and being from the south.

Anyone still banging on about the death of rock hasn't checked the country scene recently. A riotous assemblage of southern-fried shit-kickers have stolen rock'n'roll's heart, and are holding it ransom somewhere below the Mason-Dixon Line. Blackberry Smoke, Whiskey Myers, A Thousand Horses, Lee Bains III & The Glory Fires… the list is longer than a coast-to-coast bootleg run.

The Cadillac Three sit at the confluence of these two grand American traditions. The trio's third album, the grandly titled but stubbornly unpretentious *Legacy*, yokes the twang of country music to rock's fuck-you attitude. The result is as potent as a batch of freshly distilled moonshine.

The Cadillac Three's original modus operandi – the missing link between Metallica and Lynyrd Skynyrd – has been abandoned by the side of the road somewhere along the way. Given it was a fairly clunky idea to start with, that's not the worst thing in the world. They sound way more comfortable in their skin these days, easing back on the heaviness in favour of an altogether more relaxed blend of heat-haze guitars and sippin'-whiskey-on-the-porch grooves.

Not that they've thrown the baby out with the bath water. TC3 are still chiefly preoccupied with three things: booze, good times and being from the south.

Well over half of the songs on *Legacy* include a reference to alcohol, not least *Tennessee* (a celebration of the Volunteer State's fine musical heritage that name-checks fellow outlaw Sturgill Simpson) and rubber-limbed hangover anthem *Dang If We Didn't*, a song whose sloppy grin suggests it's not quite as contrite about what it got up to as it pretends to be. Even on *Hank & Jesus*, a celebration of two of country music's iconic figures (that's Messrs Williams and H Christ, in case you were wondering) a bottle isn't far away. *'I was baptised in whiskey,'* singer Jaren Johnston croaks in that Tennessee twang, and you kind of believe him.

But *Legacy* is best when they slide out of the General Lee and step away from the *Dukes Of Hazard* shtick: *American Slang* is sleek modern radio rock with a side order of melancholic nostalgia that nods equally to Bruce Springsteen and the Kings Of Leon; the subdued closing title track finds Johnstone in introspective mood, musing that his legacy won't be his music so much as his family. You can take the boy out of Nashville, etc.

The Cadillac Three won't win any awards for originality, but then that isn't really their job. Rock'n'roll is safe in country's hands.

Dave Everley

Living Colour

Shade *MEGAFORCE*

Black-rock veterans still harder than the rest on mind-blowing blues-rock milestone.

Living Colour are the world's longest-serving black-rock practitioners next to George Clinton's Funkadelic. Their sixth album in 30 years and the follow-up to 2009's *The Chair In The Doorway*, *Shade* sees guitarist Vernon Reid, singer Corey Glover, bassist Doug Wimbish and drummer Will Calhoun giving the blues a much-needed anger-driven 21st-century makeover after claiming to have been possessed by Robert Johnson's spirit during a transcendental blast through his *Preachin' Blues* at Harlem club the Apollo.

The band spent five years harnessing their newly inspired blues-metal visions with producer Andre Betts, forging incandescent juggernauts such as *Freedom Of Expression (F.O.X.)*, *Blak Out*, *Two Sides* (featuring a Clinton cameo) and *Invisible* (homaging late Band Of Gypsys mentor Buddy Miles), plus incendiary covers of Notorious B.I.G.'s *Who Shot Ya?*, Marvin Gaye's *Inner City Blues* and, naturally, *Preachin' Blues*.

This white-hot furnace of a black-rock milestone shows Living Colour more scathingly relevant (and desperately needed) than ever.

Kris Needs

Mogwai

Every Country's Sun

ROCK ACTION

More themes for imaginary films from Scots post-rockers.

Sometimes it's easier to track a band's development when they have songs, and lyrics, and vocalists, and all that sort of thing. With Mogwai, who generally let the instruments do the talking, it's a little different. On *Every Country's Sun* there is, admittedly, the excellent *Party In The Dark*, with its echoes of New Order, and David Holmes's *I Heard Wonders*, but lyrics like *'Hungry for another peace of mind, silent and impatient without time'* are opacity city.

What can be discerned is that *Every Country's Sun* fits neatly into the pattern of 21st-century Mogwai releases, with the charge of *Come On Die Young* and *Young Team* channelled into a quieter but still often relentless mood. The slight trance of opening track *Coolverine* sits comfortably with the staticky grunt of *Battered At A Scramble* (this album is stuffed with great titles) while *aka 47* would be quite happy on one of Eno's ambient records and the superbly named *Don't Believe The Fife* sounds like a theme tune written by a steam engine.

A break from the band's soundtrack work, ironically, *Every Country's Sun* sounds, like a brilliant soundtrack in its own right. To what is up to you.

David Quantick

Fireroad

Flesh, Blood & Bone *133 RPM*

A working-class hero is something to be.

With a lyrical focus on the struggles of blue-collar folk, this second album from Welsh rockers Fireroad is heartfelt, honest and – most importantly – seriously rocking. It's all here, from AC/DC to the inevitable comparison with Stereophonics, but ultimately main songwriter Rich Jones and co. easily transcend their influences to create something that is truly their own.

Key tracks *Light As A Feather*, *Second Hand Soldier* and *All We Have* form the emotional heart of the album, especially the latter with its slow-building, proudly defiant momentum, and the theatrical power of these songs is complemented by the more immediate pile-driving grooves of *Minute*, *Bones* and *The Raven*. Thematically strong and musically impeccable, this is rock'n'roll with depth and feeling.

Essi Berelian

Steven Wilson

To The Bone *CAROLINE*

Steven Wilson stays resolutely one step ahead.

Steven Wilson, the wunderkind of modern prog, can make your head spin with his creativity and output as producer, songwriter, bandleader and musical collaborator. Since breaking hearts of Porcupine Tree fans everywhere by going solo in 2008, Wilson has confounded expectations with, by turn, tales of gothic horror and concept records about alienation and the

numbing inevitability of modern life. That the latter, 2015's *Hand. Cannot. Erase.*, contained the sublime pop notes of its title track might have hinted where he might go next, although that didn't prevent his fans' frontal lobes exploding when the glossy single *Permanating* oozed onto the airwaves.

Had even Wilson gone too far out *there*? Of course not, he's far cannier than that. He has said that *To The Bone*, his fifth solo album, is his nod to the great prog/pop crossover albums such as Peter Gabriel's *So*. To that end it is a preposterously good mix of prog tropes – Pink Floyd guitar tones, Rush's juddering rhythms – and a clear-headed ear for melody and arrangement that makes the nine-minute *Detonation* fly by. Especially good too are the brisk *Nowhere Now*, the down-at-heel *Refuge* and the thrumming title track. *To The Bone* is arguably his best and most complete solo album yet.

Philip Wilding

Laibach

Also Sprach Zarathustra

MUTE

Nuts for Nietzsche.

If with this you're hoping for something akin to the dark EDM and mutant electro of Laibach's 2014 album *Spectre*, forget it. *Also Sprach Zarathustra* is the re-recorded soundtrack Laibach originally created for the theatrical production based on grumpy nihilist Friedrich Nietzsche's novel that premiered in Slovenia last year. If you missed it – and surely, you did – then this is more or less what that sounded like.

It is admirably grotesque stuff, a suitable backdrop for these queasy times when totalitarianism creeps ever closer to a glitzy '68 comeback, an avalanche of grinding gears and orchestral dread, a wash of clockwork post-industrial doom that is everything you know and love/loathe about these politically charged avant-noiseniks cranked to eleventeen.

As mood music it's a stunner, the perfect complement to a lost weekend plotting your next Ubermensch moves in a haze of opium. But you can't dance to it, that much is for sure.

Sleazegrinder

Steve Vai

Modern Primitive

FAVOURED NATIONS ENTERTAINMENT

Old/new offering delivers more of the same.

Taken from sessions between 1984's *Flex-Able* and 1990's *Passion And Warfare*, *Modern Primitive* takes its inspiration from the former while exhibiting audible pointers to the latter. Sobering ballad *The Lost Chord* has Devin Townsend on vocals, *No Pockets* is a punchier, updated *Viv Woman* with all the funk of *Lovers Are Crazy*, while Thin Lizzy-style harmonics are evident on *Dark Matter* and *Lights Are On*. Opener *Bop!* is an electro-cluster of glee-club vocals that also come into play on *Pink And Blows Over, Part 2*. *Upanishads* and *And We Are One* provide nothing particularly remarkable, while the marvellously melodic *Mighty Messengers* is loaded with energy and groove. The incredible talents of bassist Stu Hamm are all over the record, which holds its own as regards versatility and dynamism but represents nothing overly exciting.

Modern Primitive (originally included as a companion disc with the 25th anniversary issue of *Passion And Warfare*) is textbook Steve Vai, but then Vai's mundane is any other artist's extraordinary.

Phoebe Flys

Epica

The Solace System

NUCLEAR BLAST

More octave-vaulting rock operatics from the mad-eyed lady of the Lowlands.

Dutch symphonic metallers Epica don't stray too far outside their heavily fortified castle of baroque bombast on this quick-turnaround sequel to last year's well-received *The Holographic Principle* album.

A six-track mini-album that manages to sound both compact and cinematically huge, *A Solace System* once again makes fertile use of the strong textural contrast between the sonorous mezzo-soprano of Simone Simons and the bestial growl of main songwriter Mark Jansen, who also plays the rapid-fire guitar solos that serve as bridges between stacked operatic choirs and blasts of pure speed-metal grind.

Most of these thrillingly uber-kitsch compositions roar along at breakneck speed, with stylistic gear shifts that occasionally grind awkwardly. That said, both the title track and *Decoded Poetry* are exhilarating hard-rock cousins of Carl Orff's ultra-dramatic modern-classical fave *Carmina Burana*, while Simons also gets to showcase her range on the fragrant orchestral power ballad *Immortal Melancholy*, an unusually restrained and lovely detour into romantic introspection.

Stephen Dalton

Boris

Dear SARGENT HOUSE

Album number 24 from Tokyo's volume-worshipping institution Boris.

If Boris still seem to be grinding away in the same nether regions of minimal riffage and maximum volume, moving at a glacial pace as they enter their 25th year, this should be viewed as a major positive. Only through such single-minded aural destruction and focus on the silences between the terrifying detonations of sound can this Tokyo trio release such painfully crafted and micro-nuanced tracks of such heaviosity and volume and unscaled beauty as *D.O.W.N. – Domination Of Waking* and *Absolutego* (the latter sounding like it was lifted straight from a wrongly forgotten Soundgarden *Superunknown* session).

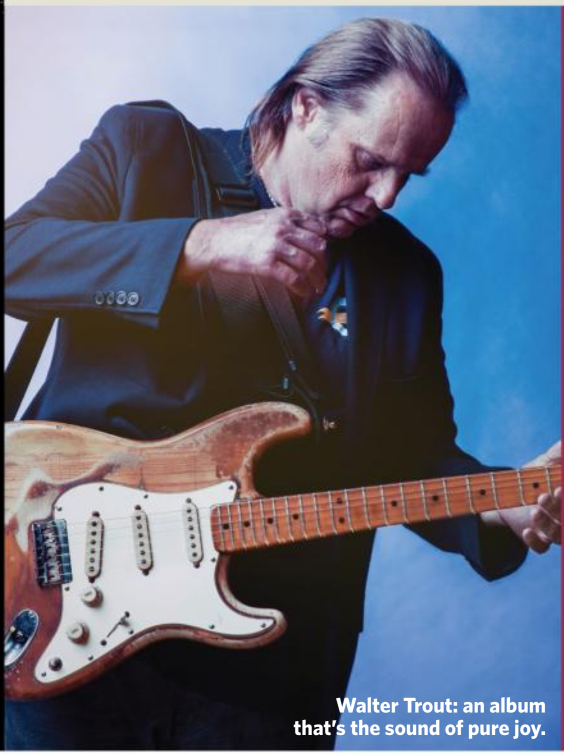
This music is not for the easily perturbed. One mighty, chundering riff follows another, and another. And another. Until silence takes over and sounds more threatening than hope. On *Beyond*, time itself slows down, stops, turns backwards and restarts – something akin to a cataclysmic retelling of Ted Hughes's poem *The Iron Man*, but with the considerable added bonus of the sound of blood drip-drip-dripping from your perforated eardrums.

Plenty of pallid indie math-rock imitators – from Godspeed! downwards – have attempted to do what Boris do here, and all have failed. Boris abide.

Everett True

ROUND-UP: **BLUES ROCK**

By Henry Yates



WALTER TROUT: AUSTIN HARGRAVE

Walter Trout: an album that's the sound of pure joy.

Walter Trout

We're All In This Together

MASCOT/PROVOGUE

Historically, the 'all-star' album is a turd dusted in glitter, more a triumph of synchronised diaries than songcraft. On *We're All In This Together*, Walter Trout has a bolder plan. The bluesman might roll out the big guns – Mayall, Bonamassa, Shepherd, Landreth – but by writing an original song for each, he has created an album with personality and soul, that you'll still be listening to when that Hollywood Vampires CD is being used as a budgie mirror.

On the album's 14 tracks, Trout identifies each guest's comfort zone then nudges them a little beyond. Kenny Wayne Shepherd is at his red line on the stinging stone-blues *Gonna Hurt Like Hell*. Sonny Landreth is palpably pushing himself on the 50s Americana of *Ain't Goin' Back*. *Blues For Jimmy T* is earthy and poignant, Trout saluting his late bass player over John Mayall's lusty harp, while Mike Zito gets the best moment, on country-pop strum *She Listens To The Blackbird Sing*.

This album is the sound of pure camaraderie. and it's a joy.

Marcus Malone

A Better Man REDLINE MUSIC

In recent times, Detroit bandleader Marcus Malone has been playing his *A Better Man* album front-to-back live, which takes some balls and speaks volumes about his confidence in this material. There's a whiff of career-best about these tracks, from the route-one muscle of *Too Long Gone* to the lighter touch and piano flourishes of *Shine Your Light* – and for Malone, that's praise indeed.

Curse Of Lono

Severed SUBMARINE CAT

Stealing their name from a Hunter S Thompson novel, Curse Of Lono deal in atmosphere. *Five Miles* is the best slow-burner I've heard in ages, all throbbing bass and shivering squalls of slide. But they're not afraid of a hook, either, and the handclap rhythms and fuzz-box electro of *Pick Up The Pieces* is one of the best ways to spend three minutes on Spotify.

Various Artists

American Epic SONY LEGACY

Not so much a box set as a paving slab, the five-CD *American Epic* almost manages the impossible task of gathering together the seminal US releases of the 1920s. The most atmospheric disc compiles 17 field recordings in pin-sharp fidelity, but the most exciting one traces New York's contribution, exemplified by the supple twang of Big Bill Broonzy's *Long Tall Mama*.

Whitehorse

Panther In The Dollhouse

SIX SHOOTER

It's a pleasure to watch Whitehorse not settling on a genre. The husband-and-wife duo's excellent *Northern South Vol 1* was nominated for Best Blues Album at the Junos, but here they head into icier, more cinematic waters, while saluting the Delta with the spidery stalk of *Trophy Wife*. We're hanging on to them by our fingernails, but this is impressive stuff.

George Thorogood

Party Of One ROUNDER/SPINEFARM

Delaware's finest gives the Destroyers time off as he revisits his acoustic blues roots.

If George Thorogood is known for one thing – other than hammering out the slide-guitar riff to his now signature tune *Bad To The Bone* (a song he first unveiled when he opened for the Rolling Stones on their 1981/82 Still Life tour) on his Gibson ES-125 – it's for four decades of electrifying meat-and potatoes blues with his band The Destroyers. So commemorating their 40th anniversary with a mostly unplugged solo album seems an odd choice. But Thorogood, whose professional career began in the early 1970s with him playing such solo acoustic sets, claims that this album was "long overdue". Returning to Rounder Records, the Nashville label that launched The Destroyers in 1977, must therefore also make sense.

Party Of One opens with Robert Johnson's *I'm A Steady Rolling Man* (a song that's 80 years old yet here still sounds fresh as a daisy), and across 14 tracks (the CD adds a fifteenth) Thorogood pays homage to the songwriters who made him.

It's a simple premise, and producer Jim Gaines (who worked on three Destroyers albums between 2003 and 2009 and also has credits with Stevie Ray Vaughan, John Lee Hooker and latterly Joanne Shaw Taylor) *keeps* it simple; only a smattering of songs feature noticeably double-tracked guitars, among them a cover of *Bad News*, originally on Johnny Cash's *I Walk The Line*, and another country classic, *Pictures From Life's Other Side* by Hank Williams.

It's not entirely acoustic – Thorogood plays an electric guitar for the slide work on the opener, Elmore James's *Got To Move*, and also a cover of John Hammond Jr's *Tallahassee Women* – but mostly this sounds like one man on a stool cradling his guitar and pouring out his heart.

This works as superbly on the relative obscurity *Born With The Blues*, by Brownie McGhee, and the better-known Elmore James standard *The Sky Is Crying* on which the strings of his steel resonator guitar rattle like a snake.

In places Thorogood's vocals are reduced to little more than spoken-word (as on the cover of the Stones' *No Expectations*), rising to his trademark rasp only when it sounds like the albums sessions might have been gatecrashed by the Destroyers and he slaps out the rhythm on the guitar itself: Willie Dixon's *Wang Dang Doodle* and the three John Lee Hooker songs *Boogie Chillen, The Hookers (If You Miss 'Im…I Got 'Im)* and *One Bourbon, One Scotch, One Beer.*

Only a fool would claim the last-named track tops The Destroyers' barnstorming version, but only a killjoy would say *Party Of One* misses its target.

Neil Jeffries

Iron & Wine

Beast Epic SUB POP

The circle is complete with a back-to-basics return.

Apart from a collaboration with Band Of Horses' Ben Bridwell, it's been four years since Iron & Wine's Sam Beam graced the cultural landscape with his delicious voice and lustrous facial hair. This, the project's sixth album, is a return home of sorts with a move back to the Sub Pop label and the sparse acoustic dynamics that characterised those earliest records.

Not that this is a collection that looks back. The production is slicker and cleaner than those far off days, and the maturity of a life long lived forms the basis of the album's 11 songs.

Call It Dreaming and *Summer Clouds* encapsulate the album's strengths and also its shortcomings. This is tender and meditative music that contemplates the complex tapestry of existence. By the same token, the slow-paced nature of the songs robs the album of much needed texture that too often evokes lamentation rather than a celebration.

Julian Marszalek

Sparks

Hippopotamus BMG

New album from idiosyncratic Mael brothers.

If anyone is still keeping count, *Hippopotamus* is Sparks' twenty-fourth album – and their first in eight years. And what can Mael brothers Ron and Russell serve up on their twenty-fourth that hasn't already been paraded on the previous twenty-three? Why, more of the same delicious idiosyncratic operatic seasick-giddy pop nonsense/genius, of course.

With tracks such as the grandiloquent Stravinsky-meets-Wagner title track and IKEA-referencing *Scandinavian Design*, the casual listener is reminded quite what a debt Franz Ferdinand (for one) owe these charming latter-day sonic Picassos – the quirky, lively beats and oddball vocals throwing beach-perfect harmonies and intricate, layered ideas sporadically into the mix. Just the titles alone give enough material for several novels of top-class mystery and intrigue: the jaunty *Bummer, The Amazing Mr. Repeat*, the fast-paced *So Tell Me Mrs. Lincoln Aside From That How Was The Play?*, the suitably histrionic *Life With The Macbeths*.

There's no room here for the faint-hearted, every note plucked is a heart string torn asunder, every theatrical gesture a magnanimous sweep to the gallery. Clever, articulate and big dumb and sparkly, the Mael brothers are still pulsating, foot to the floor, full throttle.

Everett True

Inger Lorre

Live At The Viper Room

CARGO/SWEET NOTHING

Former Nymph returns to her ragged glam-punk heartland.

Infamous for pissing on an A&R man's desk and other wild antics, glam-punk diva Inger Lorre broke up her former band The Nymphs just as the grunge-fuelled alt.rock boom exploded. She has remained a semi-dormant cult figure ever since, despite sporadic collaborations with famous friends including Henry Rollins, Iggy Pop and Jeff Buckley.

On this tentative live comeback album she revisits Nymphs semi-classics including *Imitating Angels* and *The Highway*, now ragged and husky with age, and tackles some choice covers including an agreeably muscular take on Siouxsie And The Banshees' *Monitor*. Lorre's voice has acquired a soulful rawness that can shade into nasal flatness, and her sloppy-sleazy band rarely catch fire, but her two new compositions show promise for the future, especially the voluptuous blues-soaked anti-love howl *Hate In My Heart*.

Stephen Dalton

Chris Catalyst

Life Is Often Brilliant

PLEDGEMUSIC

Eureka Machine man goes pop!

Guitarist for hire and an occasional member of the Sisters Of Mercy, Chris Catalyst is probably best known as the driving force behind the eclectic Eureka Machines. *Life Is Often Brilliant*, his first solo album, examines the cultural and personal wreckage that was 2016. And, judging by the results, he wasn't the only one who barely got out alive.

As lamentable as heartbreak and recrimination are, they make for excellent fodder for the singer-songwriter who can create musical redemption on a ringing guitar chord and

a sparkling pop tune. Catalyst may be ruing the one who got away, but he's putting his pain to work in a slew of bombastic, brightly hued tunes like the wonderful *Far* which references both Super Furry Animals and Honeycrack, while the rattling *Cracking Up* touches the hem of Britpop's garment, sounding like Blur if their songs had been arranged by the Manics' James Dean Bradfield.

Philip Wilding

Venom Inc
Ave NUCLEAR BLAST

'Ave some of that.

Comprising two-thirds of the original Venom (guitarist Mantas and drummer Abaddon) and three-quarters of the line-up that recorded Venom's *Prime Evil* album in 1989, plus Tony 'Demolition Man' Dolan in place of Cronos on bass and vocals, Venom Inc's hellfire credentials are undeniable. But do they miss the presence of old demonic croaker Cronos? Not a jot. *Ave* is as evil as Satan's bleeding anus and certainly on a par with the early records by the Geordie black metal pioneers.

This writer once described Venom's debut album *Welcome To Hell* as having the hi-fi dynamics of a 50-year-old pizza. And one criticism that can be levelled at *Ave* is that at times it does sound rather too polished for these corrupted tastes. Plus – as you can tell by track titles such as *Forged In Hell* and *I Kneel To No God* – it's utterly, skin-blisteringly remorseless. It's not until final song – the word 'song' is used advisedly – *Black N Roll* that a hint of the dark humour of old creeps in.

Venom Inc? More like Venom llc: loud, loathsome, cataclysmic.

Geoff Barton

Hard Working Americans
We're All In This Together MELVIN/THIRTY TIGERS

Supergroup of sorts jam for America.

Todd Snider is a grittily literate, romantic and political singer-songwriter, put on the Americana map by *East Nashville Skyline* (2004). With Hard Working Americans, his band since 2013, his lyrics are usefully roughed up in a near-jam-band part of town. This supergroup from the bohemian margins also includes Neal Casal, an Americana stalwart now with the Chris Robinson Brotherhood, and southern rock royalty Duane Trucks on drums.

We're All In This Together, a live album recorded mostly in Birmingham, Alabama, catches them in their element. *I Don't Have A Gun* finds Snider the crazed liberal rock'n'roll preacher inspiring "my fellow hippies" in the deep south into an anti-gun singalong, screaming guitars and runaway-train jams come as standard, Chuck Berry is covered and Elvis quoted, in a return to rowdy fundamentals which also shames the greed-heads who give the lie to the album's name, and necessitate the band's.

Nick Hasted

Jonny Lang
Signs MASCOT

Blues guitar wunderkind continues to age gracefully.

It's more than 20 years since Johnny Lang's Grammy-winning exploits as a 15-year-old guitar prodigy saw him hyped as the future of the blues. The future, it turned out, had other ideas. Nonetheless, the return to form Lang enjoyed on 2013's *Fight For My Soul* is consolidated on his new *Signs*.

He's moved on from his 00s reincarnation as a born-again Christian blues rocker with the edges somewhat smoothed off; *Last Man Standing* is the only out-and-out rocker here, and its slogan-ish chorus sounds more like Whitesnake than he probably ever intended. The rock'n'soul vibe that abounds elsewhere seems to suit him better – there's an impressively Kravitz-like quality to the title track, and muscular grooves such as *What You're Made Of*. And, as the supremely emotive licks of *Bring Me Back Home* attest, he can still make those frets sing.

Johnny Sharp

Cats In Space
Scarecrow HARMONY FACTORY

Flash, a-ah… it's the sound of the 70s!

On the band's 2015 debut *Too Many Gods*, the six members of Cats In Space stylishly pooled their individual experiences among rock's also-rans to recreate the arty end of the 70s pop-rock spectrum: 10cc, ELO, John Miles *et al*. On new album *Scarecrow* they comfortably stretch their formula.

Although half the 10 songs clock in at under four minutes, all sound epic. The band channel the sounds of artists including Queen (often, but on *Broken Wing* in particular), Styx (*Scars*), and Elton John (a reverential steal on the cunningly post-modern *2'59"*) and even Todd Rundgren's *Utopia* (*Clown In Your Nightmare*).

Despite having two guitarists, *Scarecrow* only occasionally explodes into riff-led rock. Instead, vocal harmonies – fabulous, luscious and pouting – rule the roost in AOR-style pop. Sometimes, despite the soaring voice of Paul Manzi and the keyboards of Andy Stewart, those harmonies are more memorable than the tunes, but for the most part *Scarecrow* works well.

Neil Jeffries

Alter Bridge
Live At The O2 Arena + Rarities NAPALM

Burnished arena rock reaches its zenith.

It's easy to dismiss Alter Bridge's grandstanding rock'n'roll. But while the argument rages on over who the next generation of Download headliners might be, Alter Bridge are quietly waiting for the call. In a year or two they'll close the Sunday at Download, while we wonder what the original debate was about after all.

This latest collection sounds like a prelude to those (inevitable) shows: near histrionic adulation and pitch-perfect tunes that roar; arena rock writ large. For the less ardent admirer there's also a disc of hard-to-find and unreleased tracks, especially the rare gem that is *Solace*, which makes you wonder why it has never seen the light of day before now.

With Alter Bridge, resistance is futile.

Philip Wilding

ROUND-UP: MELODIC ROCK
By Dave Ling

Lionheart: roaring again with an album of previously unreleased gems plus covers.

Lionheart
Second Nature AOR HEAVEN

Lionheart formed in 1980, and their first six years were plagued by line-up instability and record label ineptitude, and also the misguided assumption that they were just another dodgy heavy metal band. But Lionheart were weaned on classic North American hard rock, and the keyboard touches of guitarist Steve Mann sweetened the mix with delicious pomp.

Second Nature reintroduces the British band, reborn last year after an absence of three decades. Linchpins Dennis Stratton (formerly with Iron Maiden), Mann, bassist Rocky Newton and drummer Clive Edwards are fronted by Lee Small (Shy/Phenomena/Skyscraper), who reins in his sometimes all-too-obvious Glenn Hughes influence to fit their sound like a glove.

The album is a seamless mix of old yet unreleased gems and five tunes written since the reunion, while the band add their own fingerprints to Chris De Burgh's *Don't Pay The Ferryman*, and *Every Boy In Town* previously recorded by NWOBHM cult heroes Taurus. The sound is lush and crisp, the hooks enticing and deep, the band's quality unmistakable.

The Lion roars again.

Degreed
Degreed GAIN/SONY

Since 2005, Stockholm natives Degreed have developed into masters of modern melodic hard rock, and this self-titled album comprises a collection of hard-hitting, imaginatively-produced and utterly irresistible tunes. As the saying goes, it's all killer, no filler, and before the end of 2017, within the group's chosen genre there are likely to be few better songs than the brilliant *Tomorrow*.

7HY
For The Record LIONS PRIDE

Since releasing their debut album that featured many special guests, 7HY (Seven Hard Years) have condensed to a duo of Alan Kelly (once the drummer with Shy) and American singer Shawn Pelata. *For The Record* sees the pair melding weighty nuggets of melodic hard rock with hummable choruses to establish a comfortable, persuasive formula.

Janet Gardner
Janet Gardner PAVEMENT MUSIC

If you're expecting Richard Marx/Jeff Paris-inspired pink fluffiness from this solo album by Vixen's peroxide lead singer, look elsewhere. Made in conjunction with guitarist, songwriter and producer Justin James, *Janet Gardner* is a vehicle for what is often termed 'modern rock'; big, chunky and immensely impersonal, with the ballad *Best Friend* being a rare beacon of familiarity.

Moritz
About Time Too SHADOWS OF A DREAM

A bit like London buses, you wait ages (in this case 24 years) for a Moritz album and then three come along at once. Co-founding guitarist Greg Hart, who these days is busy with Cats In Space, doesn't feature on *About Time Too*, although the likes of *To The Moon And Back* and *Forever Is* stick closely to the band's pure-AOR blueprint.

★CLASSIC★ ROCK

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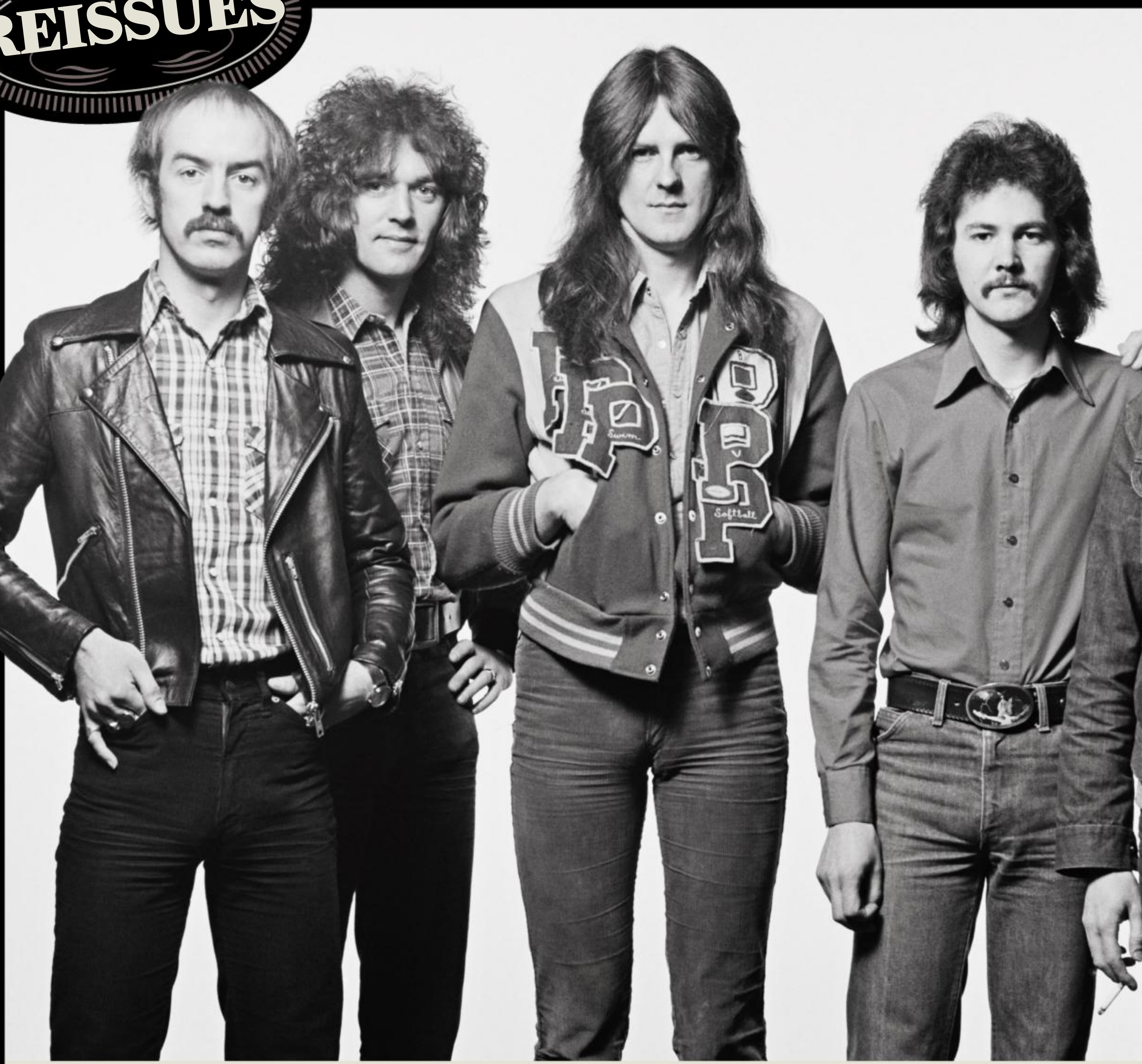


Saxon

The Solid Book Of Rock DEMON

Lavish collection of Saxon's studio albums from 1991-2009 plus bonus material.

Some years ago this writer found himself ensconced in the hallowed confines of London's legendary Abbey Road studios, listening to an engineer remix several early Saxon albums. The original reel-to-reel tapes were there in all their (power and) glory, housed in those giant circular silver biscuit tins they utilised before ProTools came along and ruined everything.

Upon opening the tin that contained the tape for 1980's *Strong Arm Of The Law*, something magical happened. Out dropped a sheet of paper with the original lyrics for the album's standout track, *Dallas 1pm*, written on it. If you've ever seen such a thing, you'll know they're usually full of incomprehensible spidery writing and multiple crossings-out. But not this one. Saxon's tempestuous tale of the 1963 assassination of US President John F Kennedy was presented in the manner of a gold-star A-Level essay. Immaculately rendered via an old-fashioned typewriter, no spelling mistakes, centred on a sheet of A4 paper. That this was the painstaking work of Peter Rodney 'Biff' Byford, I had no doubt. Away from his big-teasin' bluster the Saxon frontman has always had a studious, not to say meticulous, approach to the art of heavy metal. A never-surrender attention to detail has always been the hallmark of Saxon's career, even through the dark days, doom-mongering and downtimes.

Talking of which… *The Solid Book Of Rock* could quite easily be retitled *Saxon: The Wilderness Years*, when they were more under the radar than flight Scandinavian 101 (ref. *747 (Strangers In The Night)*). But first the detail.

GETTY

This set comprises 14 discs altogether, including all nine of Saxon's studio albums from 1991 to 2009. There are eight rare-ish tracks and two bonus CDs: *Classics Re-recorded*, which came with the initial pressings of 2001 album *Killing Ground*, and *Lionheart – Rough Studio Mix*, originally issued on the 2006 limited edition of the album of the same name. The collection is rounded off by three DVDs and a glossy 12" x 12" booklet. So far, so lavish.

But here's the nitty-gritty. When the record this collection is named after (almost) came out in '91, Saxon were pretty much dead in the water; *Solid Ball Of Rock* was released the same year as Nirvana's *Nevermind*, Soundgarden's *Badmotorfinger* and Pearl Jam's *Ten*, and to say that no one noticed is an understatement. I was working on *Kerrang!* magazine at the time and, blinded by this new phenomenon dubbed 'grunge', Biff and co. seemed a laughable anachronism. At this period of monumental change, who in Satan's name would have the audacity to write a song called *Bavarian Beaver*? Er, that'd be Saxon.

But, as is their wont, the band played on, through 1992's workaday *Forever Free (Get Down And Dirty? Can't Stop Rockin'?* Pur-lease!); 1995's *Dogs Of War*, the swan song for longstanding guitarist Graham Oliver; 1997's *Unleash The Beast*, marking the debut of guitarist Doug Scarratt and representing something of a return to form with pandemonium-inducing tracks such as *Ministry Of Fools* and *Bloodletter*; and 1999's equally decent *Metalhead*. At this stage Saxon might have still been a band out of step, out of time, but their riposte could be heard resoundingly via the title of *Metalhead*'s track nine: *Piss Off*. The band's turnaround, of sorts, continued with sixteenth (!) studio album *Lionheart*, released in 2004. Saxon are always at their best when they pay tribute to their British roots, and the title track, *Witchfinder General* and *Jack Tars* struck a resounding tone with their – admittedly diminished – fan base.

So to 2007's *The Inner Sanctum*, released following Saxon's TV appearance on Harvey Goldsmith's *Get Your Act Together*, a programme that aimed to restore the popularity of artists who had seen better times. In truth the song that Goldsmith hoped would relaunch Saxon's career – *If I Was You*, a critique of Britain's burgeoning gun culture – was complete rubbish. But the band's loins were duly girded and *Sanctum* tracks such as *I've Got To Rock (To Stay Alive)* and *Attila The Hun* proved they still possessed their chops, emphatically and wholeheartedly.

Into The Labyrinth in 2009 continued the rehabilitation process, wrecking-ball ditties such as *Battalions Of Steel* and *Valley Of The Kings* proving that Saxon's denim-and-leathered mojo had returned – and then some. But can you forgive Byford's appearance as King Arthur in Spanish art film *Perceval*, included here on one of the bonus DVDs? You know what, given all the trials and tribulations just talked about, I think we can.

'It could easily be retitled *Saxon: The Wilderness Years*.'

Geoff Barton

Alien Sex Fiend

Fiendology CHERRY RED

A rewarding retrospective: that's what fiends are for.

Subterraneanly subtitled *A 35-Year Trip Through Fiendish History 1982-2017 A.D. And Beyond*, this three-CD set gambols with gothic glee through the career of an undervalued British institution.

As early birds on London's Batcave scene Alien Sex Fiend are forever portrayed as semi-comic over-the-top goths, tied to the early 80s. It's partly their own, sporting sense of humour that has allowed others to belittle them, but outside this country's fashion trends they've developed a degree of respect in territories as far-flung as Japan and the US, moving into the industrial and electronica scenes with music which is – in case you haven't bothered to listen to them since goth's golden age – surprisingly nimble, witty and muscular.

Their tongue-in-cheek horror imagery adorns extended grooves such as *Now I'm Feeling Zombified* and *I'm Doing Time In A Maximum Security Twilight Zone*. These may share vocabulary with The Cramps, but their body language prefers rhythmic dance music to garage rock. Often, produced by Youth, they sound like a smarter Sigue Sigue Sputnik, and claims that they influenced The Prodigy and Sleaford Mods aren't as daft as you might think.

Kris Needs's vibrant sleeve notes emphasise that goth clubbing was always as much about fun as frostiness, and this romp through Mr. and Mrs. Fiend's oeuvre confirms that.

Diehards will enjoy unreleased tracks and mixes (and two teasers from their next album), while those who only pretended to die to look cool at the Batcave will find that resurrecting one's fondness for this ironic gloom makes deathless sense.

Chris Roberts

Chris Jagger

All The Best BMG/ABSOLUTE

A retrospective collection from the lesser-known Jagger.

With a career that has taken in stints as an actor, journalist, guitar maker and broadcaster as well as musician, it would be all too easy to sneer at Chris Jagger. And while the family connection has undoubtedly given Jagger minor access to artists such as David Gilmour and singer Sam Brown, both of whom guest here as well as brother Mick, taken on its own terms this 16-track retrospective from the past 20 years boasts just about enough merits to stand on its own two feet.

Naturally, the blues remains the obvious touchstone, but, as evidenced by *Got Me (Where You Want Me)* and *On The Road*, Jagger's musical calling errs more on the side of spicy Cajun and country flavours. These are tracks that rollick along in their own easy-going fashion. Elsewhere, *Law Against It* rubs shoulders with early Dire Straits.

David Gilmour's trademark slide guitar and sustained notes make their presence felt on *It's Amazing What People Throw Away* and *Junkman*, but all too often it's difficult to shake the feeling that, much like Jools Holland And His Rhythm And Blues Orchestra, Chris Jagger works far better in a live setting than on your stereo.

Julian Marszalek

Dickey Betts & Great Southern

Southern Rock Jam

RETROWORLD/FLOATING JAM

Holding firm after the Allmans.

The Allman Brothers' seemingly hopeless disintegration prompted no revolutionary rethinking from Dickey Betts. Instead, the man whose twin-lead guitar with Duane Allman had been their original molten core formed a lesser southern rock band, and released the two albums compiled here.

With Dan Toler as his new guitar foil, Dickie Betts & Great Southern's 1977, self-titled debut's songs are routine, but the style and authority of Betts's playing stays sturdy, not least on the cat-scratch, roadhouse blues of *Good Time Feeling*. The title track of 1978's *Atlanta's Burning Down* cuts deeper, in a Band-style account of a Confederate soldier journeying back to his blazing home, carried by Betts's uncharacteristically sweet, yearning vocal. His dirty growl, sultry slide-guitar dives and high-kicking solo on *Leavin' Me Again* have more swampy conviction than the debut or the misbegotten Allmans reunion which followed.

Nick Hasted

IAN DICKSON/PRESS

Eno

Reissues *UNIVERSAL*

Knob-twiddler's post-Roxy Music experimental albums brought the future into the present.

Even amid the explosion of otherworldly glam that characterised the summer of 1972, Eno stood out. Yet while he was one of only two people you weren't entirely convinced hadn't beamed in 'on a wave of phase' from another planet, it was always hard to fathom what it was he actually *did* in Roxy Music. Outwardly he looked fabulous and waggled a joystick. Not much, but more than enough for most of us to prefer him to Bryan Ferry.

Contemporary reports suggested Ferry addressed Eno's burgeoning popularity in much the same way the Wicked Queen dealt with Snow White, but it was actually Eno's decision to quit Roxy. The split left even his staunchest leopardskin-bedazzled supporters worried for his future. After all, fabulousness aside, you didn't see many solo joystick manipulators waggling to packed houses at The Rainbow.

Nobody expected what happened next. Eno disappeared for a brief spell, before returning with a series of surprisingly accurate visions of the future. 1974's *Here Come The Warm Jets* (**9/10**), its title a thinly veiled reference to the sort of water sport for which a lifebelt isn't always necessary, was a revelation. Revisited now, all remastered and glossy, it dazzles at every turn. It casually outperforms contemporary peaking Roxy for ingenuity and influence, and still retains relevance. With a host of visionaries aboard – guitarists Spedding, Manzanera and Fripp, bassists Wetton, Busta Jones and Paul Rudolf – this pan-generic, multi-faceted precursor to everything from ambient soundscapes through gritty punk to spikily angular art rock was meticulously produced and post-produced by Eno himself to flawless perfection.

Ten months on, *Taking Tiger Mountain (By Strategy)* (**9/10**), although stripped of shock value by a modicum of familiarity, is arguably even better. Eno's finely tooled, evocative lyrics and incomparably playful vocal (quintessentially English in a way that didn't reek of musty hymn books) renders each selection – realised largely by a five-piece core band featuring Robert Wyatt on drums – essential. Two years later, *Another Green World* (**7/10**) though brilliant by any standards, feels like this litter's runt, a funk and ambient-fuelled experiment, its material accessible and engaging but its promise fully realised only on '77 masterpiece *Before And After Science* (**9/10**). There's nothing wrong here. With Krautrock (Roedelius, Moebius, Jaki Liebezeit) and Talking Heads (*Kings Lead Hat*) added to its melting pot and Fripp at full-tilt, it occasionally reaches greater heights than even Bowie's *Low*.

Ian Fortnam

Monster Magnet

Reissues *NAPALM*

Two classics from the New Jersey band that helped birth stoner rock.

It was the end of the 80s. In Seattle there was Soundgarden and the laconic, Mark Arm-fronted Green River (shortly to spawn Pearl Jam and Mudhoney) reinventing hard rock and blues-based metal. Over in New Jersey a collection of deranged bearded Black Sabbath and Hawkwind fans going by the name of Triple Bad Acid (also King Fuzz and Dog Of Mystery) were putting together the finishing touches to their stoned-out 1989 masterpiece *Tab*. Four tracks of wah-wah-infused space-rock, the album revolved around its monstrous titular song: 34 minutes of oscillating guitar effects and demented screaming, its heavy acid vibe sounding like it had been beamed in direct from the Fillmore circa 1967.

These days Monster Magnet (as they became) might have scantily clad girls pillow-fighting in their videos, but back then their nascent stoner rock felt like the most likely to succeed alongside fellow 70s godhead freaks Soundgarden.

Tab (**9/10**) was Monster Magnet's first full-length record (think of Sonic Boom's lengthier, more out-there excursions in Spacemen 3 and you're close), but it was only given a full release after the success of the mighty 1991 cult classic *Spine Of God* (**9/10**). That, the Magnet's second, is a mind-expanding fusion of psychedelic, punk, stoner, heavy and space-rock and metal, with songs such as the blowsy *Zodiac Lung* and the sprawling, pulsating centrepiece *Black Mastermind*. Partly overlooked at the time due to the success of *Nevermind*, it has stood the test of time well. Very well. A stone-cold, stoned/rolled classic.

Everett True

Lillian Axe

Reissues *ROCK CANDY*

Attack of the mad axemen.

Yet another casualty of record company indifference, Lillian Axe fitted perfectly into the hair-metal milieu of the late 80s and should have achieved much greater success with this excellent brace of now reissued albums.

Originally formed in '83 in New Orleans, the band created enough of a local buzz to attract Ratt manager Marshall Berle, who duly parachuted in Ratt guitarist Robbin Crosby to produce their eponymous 1988 debut (**7/10**). Unsurprisingly, there's more than a slightly rodent-like feel to the production, with chief songwriter guitarist Stevie Blaze showing great promise on *Dream Of A Lifetime, Nobody Knows* and *Inside Out* – great riffs and solid, memorably melodic choruses. Unfortunately their label MCA failed to promote the album and Berle was too busy with Ratt to care.

The following year's *Love + War* (**7/10**), produced by Tony Platt (AC/DC, Def Leppard), found Blaze experimenting with an impressive array of tunes way beyond the typical pole-dancing anthems offered by the band's peers. Grandiose, ambitious epics *Ghost Of Winter*, the title track and *The World Stopped Turning* suggested an intriguing future direction for the band, but the album suffered the same fate as the first.

Still a cult-level going concern today, Lillian Axe could have gone the distance.

Essi Berelian

Kreator

Reissues *NOISE/BMG*

Four genre classics from under-sung German thashers.

Still hugely popular among fans of yer actual heavy fucking metal more than 30 years after leading the charge for Germany's thrash scene, Kreator seldom get the credit they deserve. The band's first four albums are all established classics and rightly revered as integral pieces in the blood-spattered thrash jigsaw, so it's cheering to note that a particularly efficacious remastering job and some generous bonus material make these reissues well worth purchasing for the second, third or possibly fourth time.

There's nothing else quite like the ridiculously snotty eruption of chaotic teenage fury that is 1985's *Endless Pain* (**7/10**). Kreator could barely play their instruments at this point, but that didn't prevent them from pushing thrash into darker, faster and nastier territory than anything the Americans had managed.

Follow-up *Pleasure To Kill* (**9/10**) is an underground metal

benchmark, the European *Reign In Blood* and still one of the most thrillingly deranged metal records ever made.

1988's *Terrible Certainty* (**8/10**) saw its predecessors' berserk barrage tidied and sharpened up, but songs such as *Storming With Menace* and *Toxic Trace* were still vicious, exhilarating and delivered with hair-raising levels of precocious intensity.

1990's precise and hook-laden *Extreme Aggression* (**9/10**) is the best of the lot, as Kreator grew into their status as Euro-thrash heroes, wrote the finest songs of their career and confirmed that they were in this for the long haul. If *Betrayer* doesn't make you want to run through a brick wall, this thrash thing probably isn't for you.

Dom Lawson

Redbone

Potlatch/Message From A Drum/Cycles *RETROWORLD*

Native-American rock pioneers' steamy threefer.

According to legend, it was Jimi Hendrix who suggested that Pat and Lolly Vegas consolidate the fierce reputation they'd built at LA's hip clubs and studios by forming a band that celebrated their Native-American heritage. The brothers flew their roots with pride after bringing in Yacqui guitarist Tony Bellamy and drummer Pete 'Last Walking Bear' De Poe to form Redbone in 1969.

After 1970's self-titled debut, Redbone brewed up the multi-hued gumbo of *Potlatch*, their vivid vocal harmonies and supernatural chops straddling Louisiana funk on *Maggie*, steamy blues rock on *Drinkin' And Blo*, wild Sunset Strip freak-out on *Without Reservation* and defiant soul on acoustic ballad *Alcatraz* (commemorating the previous year's Indians of All Tribes occupation of the notorious prison island).

The following year's *Message From A Drum* gave Redbone their only UK hit with the sultry hoodoo of *The Witch Queen Of New Orleans*. Although perfect for *Top Of The Pops'* dancers, the mothership album showed they were much more than a Native-American gimmick act, with *Jerico* defining swamp-funk and *Niji Trance* presaging disco.

This threefer's second disc skips Redbone's subsequent three Epic Records albums to land on the yacht-rock-with-edge of 1977's *Cycles*, their first for RCA, completing a worthwhile account of these often overlooked pioneers.

Kris Needs

Theatre Of Hate

Who Dares Wins *CHERRY RED*

Thirty-six years' worth of the post-punk noirists' live sets.

Warrior rock? Dystopia pop? Call it what you want, but Kirk Brandon's po-faced, stiff-quiffed quartet certainly helped blueprint a distinct strand of quasi-goth pomp-punk in the early 80s, ploughing a furrow somewhere in between Killing Joke, Southern Death Cult and the Banshees.

Their reputation spread initially via bootlegs of their live shows, a spread they sought to stem by releasing *He Who Dares Wins*, a live album recorded in Leeds in 1981, as their debut self-released album. The fact that they released only one relatively patchy studio album before their split in late '82 meant that, along with its sequel, recorded in Berlin, *HWDW* did much to spread the band's reputation.

Those two albums have been collected together on this five-CD set, along with recordings of 2012 and 2017 sets by the re-formed (and mostly original) line-up, and a newly released vintage recording of a 1982 show in Brussels. The recent shows are, as you might expect, better recorded, but despite the rejuvenated band's best efforts they rarely match the ragged righteous passion that informs the early recordings. The new Brussels bootleg is particularly dodgy in sound quality, but its raging versions of tracks such as *Incinerator* and *Legion* are as good as any you'll hear, with buzz-saw guitars high in the mix and Brandon sounding on the verge of a vocally induced aneurysm.

Johnny Sharp

The Verve

Urban Hymns *VIRGIN*

Twentieth-anniversary splurge of lad-rock milestone, now with B-sides and session tracks.

After three years of feeling supersonic, Wigan band The Verve's third album acted as a sonic wake-up call for the Britpop-addled masses. '*You're a slave to the money then you die*,' boomed Verve singer Richard Ashcroft in Stones-sampling chart-topper *Bitter Sweet Symphony*, while *The Drugs Don't Work* was the most morose No.1 since Terry Jacks's *Seasons In The Sun*.

Ten million sales later, this remastered version of *Urban Hymns* still packs a punch, due largely to the contributions of errant guitarist Nick McCabe. Having left the band 18 months earlier, his last-minute playing adds a ghostly shimmer to country-rock anthem *Lucky Man* and propels space-jams *Catching The Butterfly* and *Neon Wilderness* to the kind of stratospheric peaks scaled on earlier albums *A Storm In Heaven* and *Northern Soul*. Seven-minute epic *The Rolling People*, meanwhile, remains fire-and-brimstone proof that the Britpop era wasn't all Adidas and cockney accents. Click-bait for fans, meanwhile, comes in the form of 11 scorching live tracks from their home-town Haigh Hall mega-gig in '98.

The Verve would never fly so high again. Within a year they had split up.

Paul Moody

Widowmaker

Running Free: The Jet Recordings 1976-1977

ESOTERIC

A nice pair from short-lived, pop star-fronted British supergroup.

So-called supergroups are by their very nature dysfunctional affairs. None more so than Widowmaker, who were actually named after the Lockheed F-104 Starfighter which had the unfortunate habit of crashing and killing its male pilots. Featuring in the band's line-up former Love Affair man and chart-topping scream idol Steve Ellis on vocals, ex-Spooky Tooth/Mott The Hoople guitarist Luther 'Ariel Bender' Grosvenor, one-time Hawkwind axe-man Huw Lloyd-Langton and future Rainbow/Ozzy Osbourne bassist Bob Daisley, this curious combo were quite simply an accident waiting to happen. Everlasting love was emphatically not on the agenda.

Widowmaker were a pound-shop supergroup but a supergroup nevertheless. Indeed Ellis once told this writer of an incident when they stormed the office of their label, Jet Records, to confront gangster-like boss Don Arden about his lacklustre approach to their career. Somehow the meeting ended with Bender pleasuring a security guard's Doberman.

Remarkably, however, Widowmaker's self-titled first album is a minor classic. Featuring the band in all their preening finery on the cover (think Small Faces-meets-Mötley Crüe in Kensington Market), it brims with power and presence, nowhere more than on the magnificently brooding *When I Met You*, propelled by big, booming guitar. Ellis's airy-fairy vocals should be completely unsuited to this sort of music but somehow he pulls it off. Plus the fragile frontman does get to showcase his sensitive side on *Pin A Rose On Me*. Admittedly the debut has its fair share of mellow moments, but when it rocks it rocks hard and heavy.

Unsurprisingly Ellis quit after the debut, citing the inevitable musical differences. He was replaced by John Butler, but frankly it might as well have been Stan Butler from *On The Buses*.

Second and final album *Too Late To Cry* is an erratic, unfocused affair: the very essence of a band's career going pear-shaped. Still, this remaster includes two bonus tracks and is a must for fans of lower-league 1970s British hard rock, when chaos reigned and minor egos ran rampant.

Geoff Barton

Fish

Reissues *CHOCOLATE FROG*

Former Marillion man's deluxe solo reissue campaign gets turbot-charged.

As Fish talks of bowing out of recording gracefully after one more epic album – and his interest in moving towards books and screenplays is rational given his long-held fascination with wordplay – he's getting his post-Marillion house in order. The extensive polishing project continues apace: four solo albums from between 1997 and 2004 are spruced up with multiple additions, while two recent live albums capture his current temperature.

Remastering is by sensitive Blue Nile/ Prefab Sprout legend Calum Malcolm. Each three- or four-disc set is a musical feast of consequence, but there's also much intrigue to be had reading Fish's sleeve-notes, in which his recollections are candid, self-flagellating and a genuine insight into The Making Of.

Sunsets On Empire (**7**/**10**) was co-written and produced in '97 by Steven Wilson, in one of his first high-profile assignments outside No-Man and Porcupine Tree. The meeting of neo-prog and post-prog minds gels, as Fish sings with typically brutal honesty of temptation and urban decay. Despite a varied palette – there's a hint of funk and rap at one stage – it didn't sell, hitting Fish's finances. Easy with hindsight to blame the overlong, over-heavy opener *The Perception Of Johnny Punter*, but get past that for drama and diversity.

On 1999's *Raingods With Zippos* (**7**/**10**), young Wilson 'merely' plays guitar. A troubled patch for Fish sees him co-writing with all sorts, notably one Rick Astley, and covering Alex Harvey's *Faith Healer*. It's the 25-minute 'suite' *Plague Of Ghosts* that revives his muse, staring guilt and self-pity in the eye while musically pre-empting Kate Bush's *Aerial*.

His love of film colours 2001's *Fellini Days* (**9**/**10**), where the new century and the energised guitar playing of John Wesley rejuvenate him. *3D* is an exhilarating opener, like Peter Gabriel singing for Sonic Youth. *The Pilgrim's Address* knows you can't go wrong slagging off presidents. This is arguably his most passionate, powerful album.

2004's *Field Of Crows* (**7**/**10**) – with ex-Big Country guitarist Bruce Watson prominent – is less instant but has a gentler, more ruminative pull, with *Shot The Craw* an affecting ballad. All these are liberal with demos and live tracks.

His live outings of late have successfully balanced nostalgia and new songs. *The Moveable Feast* (**8**/**10**) documents European tours between 2013-14, and *Farewell To Childhood* (**9**/**10**) offers the *Misplaced Childhood* tour of 2015.

Once the scales fall from your ears, there are oceans of personality here.

Chris Roberts

Captain Beyond

Lost & Found 1972-1973

PURPLE PYRAMID

The 'lost' recordings that made the Allmans go ape.

Duane and Gregg Allman were apparently so knocked out by Captain Beyond's demos that they promptly took the tape over to Phil Walden's gaff and convinced him to sign them to his Capricorn label. In truth, there might have been more than a touch of nepotism on the brothers' part, seeing as Captain Beyond drummer Bobby Caldwell knew the Allmans well from his days touring with Johnny Winter.

Captain Beyond's self-titled debut of 1972 nevertheless supported Walden's judgement – it's a terrific showcase for the band's gallivanting space-rock. Despite the presence of ex-Deep Purple singer Rod Evans and the Iron Butterfly duo of guitarist 'Rhino' Reinhardt and bassist Lee Dorman, they never found the commercial success their music merited, settling instead for a life of eternal cultdom.

Recently rediscovered by Caldwell, the debut album's original demos have now been dusted off for *Lost & Found 1972-1973*. Diehard fans may well lap this stuff up, particularly the cosmic potential of the previously unreleased *Uranus Highway*. Otherwise, this is essentially the first album in need of a scrub-up, its stonerish mix of heavy jams, prog and psych-blues churning along to unruly time signatures.

Dancing Madly Backwards (On A Sea Of Air) stands up particularly well, governed by a hell-for-metal groove and its ascending/descending riff. As does *I Can't Feel Nothing (Part 1)* and the more melodic, faintly jazzy *Icarus*, which landed with a bump on 1977's third and final album, *Dawn Explosion*. Still, newcomers to Captain Beyond are best directed to the better-known studio recordings.

■■■■■■■□□□□

Rob Hughes

Atlanta Rhythm Section

Truth In A Structured Form *FLOATING WORLD*

Re-release of 1989 album from southern soft rockers.

Strictly speaking, this album should be credited not to Atlanta Rhythm Section but to ARS, the acronym they were forced to go under for this album only, for legal reasons too obscure to go into. It was their first album in eight years, and it saw founding members Barry Bailey (guitar) and Dean Daughtry (keyboards) return to the studio along with vocalist Rodney Hammond and drummer Sean Burke, plus a brace of new players. The group had suffered throughout the 1980s as their 70s southern-fried, hazy stylings fell out of fashion. *Truth* was a conscious, commercial attempt at radio friendliness, glazed in a post-Jefferson Starship production.

Nonetheless, there's an old-style, strolling amiability about the album that's reassuring to long-time fans. *Awesome Love* sets the tone, while *Listen To The Wind* works up a mild guitar breeze. There are moments of pastiche – a quote from The Stones' *Start Me Up* on *I Want You Here With Me*, the highly Springsteen-esque *Neon Street*, and is that a nod to The Human League on *Don't Get Me Started* (*'She was working as a waitress at the interstate cafe'*)? Perhaps not.

Anyway, the album didn't sell and it's uncertain why it's being reissued, except to sate ARS (not Atlanta Rhythm Section) completists.

■■■■■□□□□□

David Stubbs

Hard Stuff

The Complete Purple Records Anthology 1971-1973 *PURPLE*

Hard going.

Whether it's Led Zeppelin and Swan Song, The Beatles and Apple or Emerson Lake & Palmer and Manticore, bands' own record labels were all the rage in rock's self-indulgent heyday. But apart from output from the headline acts themselves, did any good – by which we mean success – ever come out of it? With the exceptions of Bad Company (Swan Song) and Badfinger (Apple), we'd have to say, in a Paul Daniels voice: "Not a lot."

Purple Records, formed in 1971 by Deep Purple's management, was perhaps the least stellar of these vanity projects, signing such luminaries as The Bumbles, Curtiss Maldoon and Gnasher.

Bullet were one of the label's earliest acquisitions, featuring guitarist John Du Cann and drummer Paul Hammond from Atomic Rooster, along with Quatermass bassist John Gustafson. Changing their

name swiftly to Hard Stuff to avoid confusion with a US combo already called Bullet, they released *Bulletproof* in '72 and the oddly titled *Bolex Dementia* the following year.

Their music is very Rooster-esque, a dense mishmash of hard rock and prog but with none of commercial nous that enabled the Atomic ones to score chart hits. Funk rock ill-advisedly creeps into the equation on the second album.

This set comes with a wealth of bonus tracks but of chief interest is *Monster In Paradise*, a *Bulletproof* co-write with Purple's Ian Gillan and Roger Glover. Other than that, the experience is sorely lacking.

Geoff Barton

Brian Wilson

Playback: The Brian Wilson Anthology RHINO

Collection of Brian's fairly recent back pages.

Tied in to coincide with his extended *Pet Sounds* 50th anniversary tour (yep, it's still going), this 18-track collection is a mixed blessing. Comprising a bunch of remastered solo cuts including the comeback *Love And Mercy* and the orchestrated *Smile* mash-up pieces *Heroes And Villains* and *Surf's Up*, it's hard to nail the exact point where this album works.

Individually great in places but disparate as a whole, the gems for a Wilson fanatic would be the specially composed *Run James Run* (not *Pet Sounds)* that features Matt Jardine's harmony, the unreleased *Some Sweet Day* and the rescued Carl Wilson vocal track that powers *Soul Searchin'*, the most Beach Boys moment here. He's also the subject of the poignant *Lay Down Burden*. Other highlights – *Rio Grande*, *Melt Away* and the Jeff Lynne production *Let It Shine* are fabulous, but so familiar they hardly pack much surprise.

As a live draw, Wilson is probably more in demand than ever and the versions of *The First Time* and *This Isn't Love* from the Roxy Theatre capture him in his somewhat hesitant pomp, even if the old muse seems to be slightly ahead of his own delivery. The odd choice of *Colors Of The Wind* from the *In The Key Of Disney* project doesn't make much sense – the rare *Night Blooming Jasmine* would have been a better boost.

Definitely one for the archivist, *Playback* fulfils its limited brief, but you'll have to go back to *Holland* or *Carl And The Passions* to grab the real Beach Boys fix this doesn't deliver.

Max Bell

Barclay James Harvest

Octoberon ESOTERIC

One of BJH's most enduring records.

Anybody who believes Barclay James Harvest were nothing more than polite progressive paragons should give this 1976 album a spin, because there's depth, edge and humour here that delights and surprises.

The idea for the semi-mocking *Polk Street Rag*, for instance, came from the controversial movie *Deep Throat*, which you'd hardly expect to inspire such a band. But they tackle the subject with vigour. *Ra* is a dramatic piece based around the Egyptian sun god, borrowing a musical motif from Mahler. And *May Day* is a diatribe against political extremism and the bigotry it engenders – the track concludes with a choir singing six songs simultaneously, from *Land Of Hope And Glory* to *The Red Flag* and *We'll Meet Again*. This brilliant device emphasises the confusion such views can sustain in the unwary.

Even the album title, which is a piss-take on Oberon, the Fairy King in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, underlines that there's a lot more to the album than perhaps is clear at first glance.

This reissue has two CDs and a DVD, with new mixes. There are also two promotional videos and footage from an *Old Grey Whistle Test* performance.

A fine modern representation of an excellent album.

Malcolm Dome

Rick Wakeman

The Art In Music Trilogy ESOTERIC

Remastered, committed New Age noodling.

Did you get into rock for peace and quiet? If not, Rick Wakeman's 1999 ambient trilogy may come closer to incitement to violence than the intended meditative effect. Following on from his previous New Age hit, *Suntrilogy* (1991), its three CDs – *The Sculptor*, *The Writer* and *Sketches* – are meant to evoke each of those arts' characteristics. The result is three hours of repetitive, ascending musical cycles, played solo on keyboards and synths. It sounds somewhere between minor-league classical minimalism and one of those gliding 80s synth soundtracks Wakeman scored when Tangerine Dream were busy.

Track titles are more suggestive than the music. *The Village Green* conjures a numbingly slow day in someone's hellish idea of heaven. *Stories Of Bygone Days* at least manages some textural roughage as insectile background synths buzz and whir. Mostly, though, nothing in here moves. Melodies and mood stay static. It's supposed to be restorative, but it feels like you're already dead.

Wakeman's own long history of riotous living, calamitous health scares and latter-day Christian faith makes composing calming music understandable, but this would have flushed out Noriega quicker than AC/DC. It's claustrophobically placid enough to make you scream.

Nick Hasted

The Lurkers

40th Anniversary Boxed Set

BEGGARS ARKIVE

A proper five-CD, 86-track collection for a proper punk band.

The second wave of proper punk – the bands who formed in the wake of the Pistols and The Clash – was understandably accused on occasion of being derivative of the first wave. London's Lurkers were often dismissed as British Ramones copyists, but there was a lot more to them than that. From their debut single *Shadow* (included here as a seven-inch), which was rougher and more basic than anything the Ramones did, to the magnificent *New Guitar In Town* (a single the New York Dolls might have released had they been from Texas), The Lurkers understood both rock and pop (they were for a while regulars on *Top Of The Pops*, with the magnificent singles *Ain't Got A Clue* and *I Don't Need To Tell Her*), as well as punk. And, as the name of their debut album *Fulham Fallout* suggested, they were as wide and West London as could be.

Fulham Fallout is still a striking debut album, melodic and powered by drilling guitars. It contains brilliant songs like *Jenny* and *I'm On Heat*, as well arguably the strangest song ever classified as punk, the enigmatic and weird *Gerald*. It's a million miles from the blunderthud of Sham 69 or the UK Subs. It was a commercial high point for the band and paved the sexy way for Beggars Banquet's future success as a label.

By the time of 1979's *God's Lonely Men*, the musical climate was turning away from punk and while bands like the Damned, the Banshees and the Stranglers were able to adapt, The Lurkers could only offer a more rounded version of their old sound. Vocalist Pete Stride was now working more with guitarist Honest John Plain (the slightly bitty, sometimes great album they made together is included here) and the band fell apart.

This boxed set (which also includes the band's excellent BBC sessions, some of whose songs are better than the studio versions) is a worthwhile purchase for anyone who loves actual proper punk, and is a heartfelt tribute to one of the most underrated bands of their era. And while The Lurkers reunite in different forms every few years and are always worth seeing, this collection puts everything together in the right order and is a fine memorial to a great, almost lost band.

David Quantick

THE HARD STUFF BUYER'S GUIDE

Late-60s Caravan: (l-r) Dave Sinclair, Richard Coughlan, Pye Hastings, Richard Sinclair.

The Canterbury Scene

From the sublime to the ridiculous, from jaunty tunes to head-spinning jazz rock, the Canterbury scene is a prog-head's Utopia.

There are two things worth knowing about the 70s Canterbury scene. One is that many of its major players are not actually from Canterbury. The other is that there is/was no such thing as a 'Canterbury scene', according to even some people who were in it.

However, even those who say the scene never existed would agree that the tree from which the music blossomed was Wilde Flowers, which included all four original members of Caravan and a couple of Soft Machine men. Following branches from Wilde Flowers will lead you to just about every Canterbury scene band/artist of note.

You have Soft Machine, originally free-form experimentalists and psychedelic noodlers who developed into full-blown jazzers and were many rock fans' introduction to jazz via their album *Third*.

There's Steve Hillage's band Khan, whose solitary album *Space Shanty* is a relatively unknown jewel, with ideas ranging from the spacey to the hard rocking, and featuring some outstanding playing from Hillage and keyboard player Dave Stewart. From there it's but a short hop to Stewart's post-Uriel keyboard-led trio Egg, who loved to blend a nice tune with a time signature that would make your head spin. Stewart later took his dizzying keyboard virtuosity to Hatfield And The North and National Health, both of whom blended Canterbury with jazz structures and produced music that was by turns emotive, jazzy, original, oddball and decidedly groovy.

Elsewhere you would just *have* to stop off at blond heartthrob Kevin Ayers. Apart from some evergreen songs, you could also rely on Ayers to deliver the maddest lyric imaginable with tremendous cool and complete sincerity.

You'd also come to Gong, the Anglo-French revolving-door collective of muso hippies whose line-ups included some seriously talented musicians and recorded music ranging from the unlistenable to the unmissable, from early psychedelic trip-outs to jazz rock with soul.

Look around a bit more off the beaten track and you'll also come across Henry Cow, Centipede, Gilgamesh, Delivery, Quiet Sun and many more, all of whom played a part in making the Canterbury scene such a rich, varied and, importantly, fun place to explore.

Paul Henderson

Essential Classics

Caravan

In The Land Of Grey And Pink DERAM, 1971

Very probably the only great rock album that begins with a 'laughing' trombone, *ITLOGAP* is a pivotal album of 70s prog, from the Canterbury scene's de facto heads of state. The old-school charm of *Golf Girl* and the melodic elegance of *Winter Wine* – the latter arguably the best 'short-course' track the band ever recorded – are Caravan signatures, while the (vinyl side-long) expansive, multi-faceted *Nine Feet Underground* is in a class of its own.

This album effectively defines single-handedly the scene that it stands at the centre of.

Khan

Space Shanty DERAM, 1972

Odd that this real gem of an album seems to have flown under the radar of all but Canterbury scene aficionados and serious 70s progheads for 40-odd years.

A four-piece headed by guitarist/vocalist Steve Hillage and keyboard player Dave Stewart, it's hardly surprising that those two's smart chops, and some wonderful interplay between them, are all over this rocky and very acomplished record, with Hillage's playing telegraphing that his guitar-hero status was in the post. There's real songwriting craft here too, with the multi-faceted *Driving To Amsterdam* the pick of a fine bunch.

BARRY PLUMMER

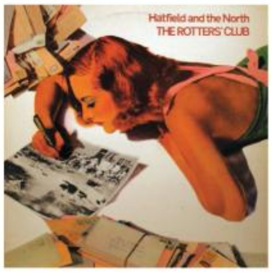
Superior Reputation cementing

Soft Machine
Third CBS, 1970

A bridge between the band's song-based early years and their 'proper' jazz years that followed, this mostly instrumental four-track double album might be a difficult listen for those who've grown up in a jazz-free zone. But if you can get past opener *Facelift*, which might at times sound like a cat chasing a rat over the organ keys, the rest should be a doddle. The with-vocals *The Moon In June* is deceptively rocky, and the outstanding *Slightly All The Time* includes a riff-driven middle section followed by one of the most beautiful melodies you'll ever hear.

Caravan
For Girls Who Grow Plump In The Night
DERAM, 1973

The departure of bassist/vocalist Richard Sinclair and the arrival of viola player Geoffrey Richardson (and bassist John G Perry) gave Caravan a different sound and new options. Pye Hastings's vocals and the return of Hammond player Dave Sinclair meant that much of the band's signature sound returned following the more jazz-flavoured departure that was the *Waterloo Lily* album, and *Memory Lain, Hugh/Headloss* and the 10-minute closer *L'Auberge du Sanglier*... are among the band's best tracks.



Hatfield And The North
The Rotters' Club DERAM, 1975

Another Canterbury scene 'supergroup' of sorts – Dave Stewart (Egg, Khan), Richard Sinclair (Caravan) Phil Miller (Caravan, Matching Mole), Pip Pyle (Gong) – Hatfield And The North took whimsy, rock and jazz flavourings and blended them into something unique. Whether it's the acrobatic instrumental interplay (*Big John Wayne Socks Psychology On The Jaw*) or the achingly melodic (*Didn't Matter Anyway*, *Fitter Stoke Has A Bath*), this album is the best example of the very distinctive prog-jazz strand of the Canterbury scene.

Steve Hillage
Fish Rising VIRGIN, 1975

If you're getting the idea that the Canterbury scene is mostly about keyboard-based bands (and to a large degree it is), and you're hoping it includes a real six-string fix, here's a record that wipes the floor with plenty of revered so-called guitar-hero albums.

Surrounding himself with musical muscle from his previous band Gong plus Dave Stewart (him again), on this, his debut solo album, Hillage riffs and solos in wonderfully imaginative and stylish fashion on a mixture of rocky workouts and spacey atmospherics. For many guitar-hero fans this album will be a revelation.

Good Worth exploring

Kevin Ayers
Joy Of A Toy HARVEST, 1969

A member of Wilde Flowers and subsequently Soft Machine (for their first album only, before they went 'proper' jazz), as a solo artist Kevin Ayers recorded more than a dozen solo albums full of songs in various styles, which couldn't have been written by anyone else. Usually quirky, often whimsical, they were almost always enthralling.

Several of those albums could stake a claim to be his best, and his first, the marvellous *Joy Of A Toy*, with the vaguely haunting *The Lady Rachel*, the gently swaying *Girl On A Swing* and the jazz-flecked *Song For Insane Times* is a major contender.

Egg
The Polite Force DERAM, 1971

It's that man Dave Stewart yet again. Listen to *The Polite Force* and you can't miss his idiosyncratic keyboard playing, here on another album that has relatively accessible prog-rock songs (fans of tricky time signatures form a queue) alongside more demanding (possibly migraine-inducing for anyone whose head only 'does' melody) experimental tracks.

Pick of the former is *A Visit To Newport Hospital*, its heavy fuzzed Hammond intro giving way to something you expect to hear on a Caravan 'best of' but for its toe-curling lyrics; the noise-work that is *Boilk*, on the other hand, will have some reaching for the Nurofen.

National Health
National Health AFFINITY, 1978

If you dig Hatfield And The North, you'll probably dig National Health as well, the band comprising three quarters of the former plus future Whitesnake man Neil Murray (yes, really) on fretless bass, and thus also sharing a lot of musical DNA.

Keyboard player Dave Stewart and guitarist Phil Miller again knuckle down to plenty of high-flying, head-spinning instrumental excursions on this debut, there's some hugely impressive elaborate long-form songwriting, and the complex harmony 'vocalising' (singing without words) by Amanda Parsons on standout *Tenemos Roads* is truly delightful.

Avoid

Matching Mole
Matching Mole's Little Red Record CBS, 1972

Not so much one to avoid as one to approach with caution, and in truth not a *bad* record at all, as you would expect from a band that includes Phil Miller and Robert Wyatt.

Many of the albums here can legitimately be said to be an aquired taste, but *Matching Mole's Little Red Record*, mixing spoken-word passages and instrumental flights of fancy, is more of an aquired taste than most of them. Dip a toe into the Canterbury pond via this album and decide you like it, though, and you'll soon find yourself kit off, goggles on and doing a forward somersault with pike into the deep end.

Essential Playlist

Winter Wine
In The Land Of Grey And Pink

Nine Feet Underground
In The Land Of Grey And Pink

Driving To Amsterdam
Space Shanty

Stranded (Effervescent Psychonovelty No. 5)
Space Shanty

Slightly All The Time
Third

Didn't Matter Anyway
The Rotters' Club

Mumps
The Rotters' Club

L'Auberge du Sanglier / A Hunting We Shall Go / Pengola / Backwards / A Hunting We Shall Go (Reprise)
For Girls Who Grow Plump In The Night

A Visit To Newport Hospital
The Polite Force

Tenemos Roads
National Health

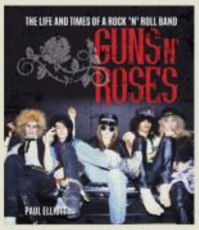
Song For Insane Times
Joy Of A Toy

Girl On A Swing
Joy Of A Toy

The Salmon Song
Fish Rising

Master Builder
You

Guns N' Roses: The Life And Times Of A Rock'N'Roll Band



Paul Elliott *PALAZZO EDITIONS*

Axl Rose and his band of merry men get the coffee-table treatment.

The OTT rock'n'roll soap opera that is Guns N' Roses is less *EastEnders* and more *The Archers* these days. The recent reunion has stripped away the tension that once fired this most dramatic of bands, bestowing an unlikely heritage status on a group who were once heralded as the harbingers of the downfall of Western civilisation by that renowned organ of record, the *Daily Star*.

Former *Sounds* and *Classic Rock* writer Paul Elliott first met Guns N' Roses back when they still had venom dripping from their fangs. He was the first British journalist to fly the flag for these most unlikely saviours of 80s rock, and he's got the war stories to prove it.

They're all crammed into this handsome, hefty, beautifully designed, vinyl-sized book. Inevitably, the gold – and the insight – comes in the first half, when the band were clustered around a tape recorder on the author's hotel room floor or inviting him to watch the cops scope out their near-mythical shared digs-cum-drug den the Hell House. While the rest of the band come over like a gang of goofy kids – albeit goofy kids with a penchant for pints of smack and flotillas of supernaturally buoyant strippers – Axl Rose's gimlet-eyed ambition is already in place.

By the time Elliott catches up with them at the end of the 80s, the cracks are showing. Even at that early stage, the gang mentality has fractured: Axl is an increasingly malevolent presence largely off-camera. When he does deign to turn up a few minutes before one gig, he prepares his voice by singing Queensrÿche's anti-heroin anthem *The Needle Lies* – a needle-sharp dig at trusty lieutenant-turned-frenemy Slash.

Equally inevitably, the last 20 years are less well catered for. While Slash, Duff, Dean, Trev and the rest went on to varying successful careers together and apart, Axl basically picked up the GN'R ball and went home with it.

Like every other journalist, Elliott found himself locked out. He does a fine job of pulling together existing strands of info, but he's added little to what was already out there. But it's still a hell of a journey, whichever way you slice it.

Dave Everley

You Love Us: Manic Street Preachers In Photographs 1991-2001

Tom Sheehan *FLOOD GALLERY*

A stunning photo-history of Wales' greatest band.

When Manic Street Preachers emerged against a backdrop of US grunge and UK baggy in an explosion of Pat Butcher-chic leopard print, eyeliner and literary-political sloganeering, it was like a flock of extremely vocal wild parrots was set loose among the sparrows. Here was a band to believe in – aggressively glam, proudly intelligent and with everything to say. And photographer Tom Sheehan was there to capture their every move.

This gorgeous book, with a foreword by bassist Nicky Wire, is an absorbing reminder of just how visual a band they've always been – it was never *just* about the music. They're spray-painted and pouting by Karl Marx's tomb in one of their earliest shoots, preening and playing with grenades on the *You Love Us* video set, and hauntingly captured in the Paris catacombs around the time of *The Holy Bible*, just before the disappearance of Richey Edwards, whose beauty radiates from every page he's on.

And Sheehan was still there afterwards, as they soldiered on as a trio, bruised but not broken, joining them in Cuba as they met Fidel Castro.

This book is alive with the electricity generated by this most special of bands, giving them the respect they deserve.

Emma Johnston

Metal Guru: The Life And Music Of Marc Bolan

Paul Roland *EXTRADITION*

Sad tale of a glamorous elf.

Marc Bolan's career was always slightly out of kilter. Parochially famous before his friend and rival David Bowie, the people he influenced usurped him. And while the punks held him in high esteem, he was destined to end up fronting a slightly dodgy TV kids' show that cast him in the role of a teatime popular entertainer when he'd rather have been taken seriously as a musician and poet.

Tyrannosaurus Rex and T.Rex were big enough to satisfy his ego but as author Paul Roland points out, he didn't translate in America where his lyrics were viewed as phony, though John Lennon reckoned he was a contender and Ringo Starr filmed his triumphant stint at the old Empire Pool in 1972.

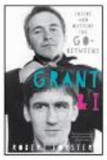
His decline – thanks to all the usual – was rapid, and his hits dated faster. Showbiz made him, but also did his head in. Listening to albums like *The Slider* and *Electric Warrior* again, which this book encourages one to do, is to hear a fragile talent, the *Metal Guru* of Glitter. As producer Tony Visconti said: "He was ready to branch out but his pitfall was always: 'Let's just do it once more for the kids.'"

Max Bell

Grant & I

Robert Forster *OMNIBUS PRESS*

The inside story of The Go-Betweens.



The Go-Betweens could have been as big as The Smiths or R.E.M., their sparkling riffs and guitar-based pop a regular Top 20 fixture, except for a seemingly jinxed career. They released six albums during the 1980s in their first incarnation – always centred around the twin songwriting team of lanky extrovert Robert Forster and stocky romantic dreamer Grant McLennan – yet with each one seemed to come a new record label, a new broken promise, a fresh shattered hope.

Relationship problems, label problems and lifestyle problems contributed to the band's wrongful lack of success. As raconteur Forster points out in this tribute to his former musical partner, subtitled *Inside And Outside The Go-Betweens*, they were no Fleetwood Mac, and yet the stories that swirled around his band's literate, laconic love songs (and relationships) are easily worthy of more hailed contemporaries. In their home town of Brisbane, there's even a bridge named after them – the Go-Between Bridge.

Grant & I is the book Forster promised McLennan, the day after his premature death in 2006. The attention to detail is mesmerising, if a little too painstaking: at times, *Grant & I* reads like an extended credits list when you wish Forster would give you just one anecdote about drugs, or sharing a house with Nick Cave, or his tempestuous love affair with Go-Betweens

MARC S CANTER/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/PRESS

drummer Lindy Morrison. Likewise, the numerous sections where he quotes lyrics.

There are parts of the book where McLennan is simply not present, and what's left out of the story often feels more telling than what's put in. Maybe that's not so odd: the Go-Betweens' great strength was the restraint and awkward chemistry.

All is forgiven for the final few chapters, where, with tears prickling down your face, you read Forster's memories of his final few days with a man he so clearly loved.

Everett True

Love That Burns: A Chronicle Of Fleetwood Mac Volume 1 1967-1974

Mick Fleetwood

GENESIS PUBLICATIONS

Mac's Peter Green era gets the luxury photobook treatment.

It'll set you back more than 300 quid, so start saving now to get this as a Christmas present for the Mac fan in your life. Focusing on their early blues-based years with original members Peter Green, Jeremy Spencer, Mick Fleetwood, John McVie, Danny Kirwan and, later, Christine McVie, it finds lanky drummer Fleetwood in a thoughtful frame of mind.

The dates in the title are misleading as Fleetwood delves way further back, beginning with childhood photos, family snaps and memories of running away from boarding school. There's a real sense of Swinging London during Fleetwood's roller-coaster journey through the city's music scene, via John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, to forming the band that bears his surname.

It's told in the likeably frank tone of an old friend, but it's all about the visuals here, and the look of the book takes it above and beyond your average autobiography. It's crammed with large, glossy photos (including some cracking ones of sessions with BB King), artwork and concert bills, all beautifully laid out to coffee-table-worthy perfection.

There's also input from friends and collaborators such as producer Mike Vernon to round out the story. One to leave in full view next time you have guests.

Emma Johnston

Spinal Tap: The Big Black Book

Wallace Fairfax CARLTON

Don't touch it. Don't even look at it. Alright, do.

Housed in a Heavaaaay! Dutaaay! cardboard slipcase and with a none-more-black inside cover, this isn't *quite* as sizeable as 'big black book' would suggest – maybe two-thirds of your usual coffee-table whopper – but it sure is packed with a pleasingly tongue-in-cheek interpretation of Spinal Tap's history, from Squatney whippersnappers surviving on deep-fried cotton wool balls to *Break Like The Wind,* the 1992 comeback that "defied all expectations and logic", plus a full Tapography.

Featuring pockets of facsimile memorabilia – the Themeland Puppet Show ticket, the Spinal Pap airport sign – it's all icing on a very silly cake and it's just as well the Scratch And Sniff card doesn't work (Leather Jacket, Cold Sore, Explosion). But the whole package does, as a fun, and funny, read, rightfully celebrating the greatest spoof band of all time.

Sadly, though, the Stonehenge napkin isn't actually a napkin. Just that one detail would have turned this up to a 12.

Jo Kendall

After Forever: The Inside Story Of Black Sabbath's Greatest Tour

Stephen 'Krusher' Joule

KINDLE ONLY

A right Sabbath romp.

This is as personal as it gets. Krusher was the DJ, MC and confidante on the 1999 Ozzfest tour of America. Now, whether this truly was the greatest of all the band's tours is irrelevant. What matters is that the combination of anecdotes, insights and previously unseen photos make this a delightful celebration of the era.

Without any hindrance from official sources, Krusher tells the story his way, never holding back on revealing the ridiculousness, hilarity and problems faced not just by Sabbath, but other bands on the road, such as Pantera and Slipknot.

Krusher documents the long, strange trip with vividness and vivacity. Some of the characters involved will doubtless be furious with certain revelations, but it's all done with affection.

Malcolm Dome

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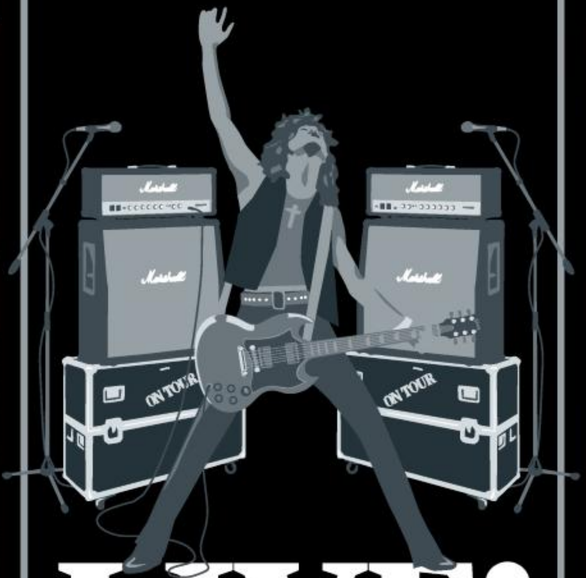
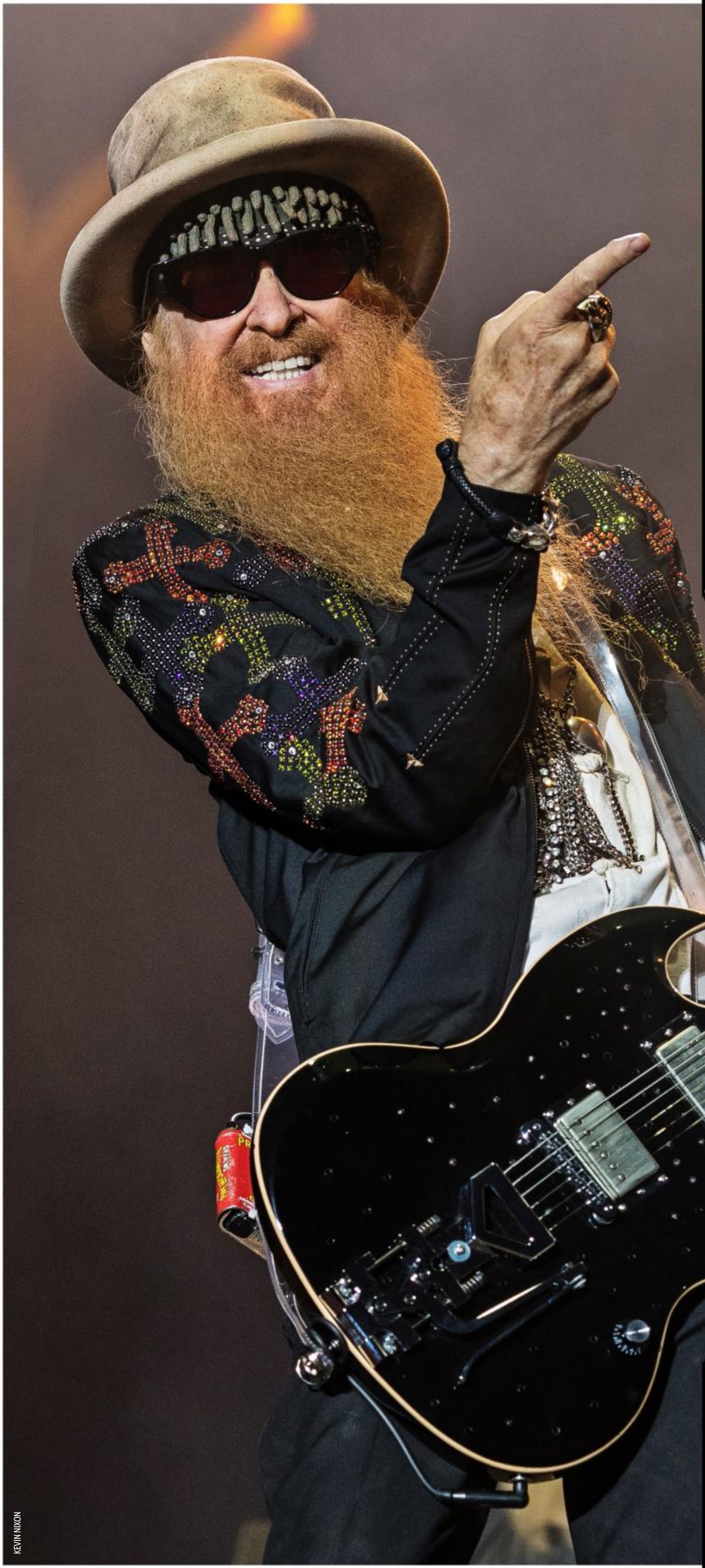


LIVE!

The High-Voltage What's On Guide

Edited By Ian Fortnam (Reviews) and Dave Ling (Tours)



KEVIN NIXON

P114

ZZ Top

How the Texan trio and others fared at the Ramblin' Man Fair.

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NOW BOOKING

The Temperance Movement

Guitarist Paul Sayer explains why they've decided to return to the clubs.

As the British band begin the countdown to the release of their third album, guitarist Paul Sayer explains why, after six years of steady ascent, they're returning to the clubs.

This tour is called 'Small rooms, new tunes'. What's the smallest of those rooms?
They're all in the ballpark of four or five hundred people, I think some even less.

Few bands of TTM's status would willingly undertake a club tour. Why go back to clubs?
Over the last couple of years we've spent quite a lot of time in America, and we felt it was important to reconnect with our audience, especially the fans that saw the band develop in those same small rooms. And of course we're going to road-test some material for the next album.

How many of those new songs will we hear?
Let's say more than five. Three or four that will probably make the final cut have already been played live, and the record will have been made by the time we hit the road, so why not? I'm well aware that, as an audience member, listening to a completely unknown set of songs can be trying, so we'll definitely be playing a whole bunch of stuff that people already know. But the whole point of this tour is to introduce the new material.

How are you making sure the few existing tickets get into the right hands?
To be totally honest, we haven't. The tour was only announced via social media, and those people are our core fan base. We know there are some disappointed fans out there but there's no real way around the problem. We're also aware that some tickets have ended up on secondary selling websites, which is very disappointing.

You spent some time at Monnow Valley Studio in Wales in June. Is the recording process now under way?
Yeah. We're going back in a month or two when more material is ready. At the moment we're still shaping the album's sound. For better or worse, we're still a band that believes in albums, and we need make to make sure that its contents make sense.

Can you give us an idea of its direction?
It's early days, so that makes it hard, but throughout each stage so far the watchword has been 'simplicity'. In the making of the record and also its writing. Let's not overthink anything.

Who's producing?
Just like the other two, we're making it ourselves with [engineer] Sam Miller. We did discuss using a name producer, and that's something that might happen in the future, but with the club tour coming up it felt right to stay in touch with our roots. It was important for us to just go and do what we do. What's special about our band is something that comes from within us.

Given the previous statement, it sounds as though no special guests are planned?
No. Again, we've met some pretty legendary musicians and I wouldn't rule out some guest spots in the future, but right now we don't want to overcomplicate the process.

Will the band's live cover of *Ziggy Stardust* (recorded at the Forum just days after Bowie's death and released as a seven-inch single for Record Store Day) make it on to the album?
We're often asked about including covers, but no. We've never been interested in cover versions. When you make a record it should come from within.

When do you hope to release the album?
I'd love it to come out early next year. Our plans for 2018 are all kind of being based around that. **DL**

The tour begins in Hebden Bridge on September 26.

A TASTE OF TEMPERANCE
★ The band's new drummer is Simon Lea.
★ As this issue went to press, most of the dates were sold out.
★ Support comes from the Naked Six.

ROB BLACKHAM/PRESS

Eric Bell

The guitarist previews his charity show appearance.

A co-founding member of Thin Lizzy, guitarist Eric Bell is set to join the cast of a sponsored charity gig in London that also features former Whitesnake guitarist Bernie Marsden and the band Gypsy Heart.

You're tracking a new album right now. How is it going?
It's going really well, and the tracks are pretty varied. The one I'm doing today is sort of an Irish thing, about the road-digging or labouring guys that come to London thinking the streets are paved with gold. They're supposed to send money home but end up drinking it instead.

The show will raise money for Drums And Disabilities. Is that a cause close to your heart?
Absolutely. I love playing charity gigs. God gave us all a talent, and if I can use mine to help other people I'm well into that.

Anyone buying a 'super ticket' (at www.oftheedgeproductions.com) is entered into a draw to win a day for two at a private album launch party on October 7, with accommodation in Cheshire thrown in.
That's pretty good, isn't it? The event is for ten people, plus their partners.

What kind of a set will you be playing?
It'll be our usual set. Again, there's a real mixture. We play some blues and of course I'll be playing you-know-what [laughs] and [Lizzy's] *The Rocker*. Actually I don't mind playing *Whiskey In The Jar* [Thin Lizzy's first hit, in 1972]. I used to have a love-hate relationship with that song, but now I'm proud of it again.

Does it seem possible that you quit Thin Lizzy forty-four years ago, following a fairly disastrous New Year's Eve concert?
Not at all. And I didn't think I'd still be here at this stage in the game. That's why I got out – the lifestyle was quite rock'n'roll.

Besides the obvious element of pride, what do you think Phil Lynott would think of the continued fascination with his music?
He'd be surprised. Underneath the charade – the leather trousers and all – I think he'd be knocked out that people still care. **DL**

The charity show is at The Lounge in London on September 3.

MAGGIE BUTLER/PRESS

The Psychedelic Furs

Tim Butler tells us why they're revisiting their classic singles live.

Where many bands elect to play a classic album from start to finish, the Psychedelic Furs' forthcoming tour will see the British art-rockers focusing on the 22 singles they've released during their 40-year career. Bassist Tim Butler explains why.

Whose idea was the singles set?
We're actually in the process of writing a new album [their first since 1991], which we'll be recording early next year. This is a reintroduction for people to Furs music. We haven't decided whether we'll mix it up or play them chronologically – that could be a good idea.

You were inspired to form the band by punk, but you were never a punk band.
Richard [Butler, singer and Tim's brother] and I went to see the Sex Pistols at the 100 Club in London in 1976. After that, Richard said: "Do you want to form a band?" None of us could play any instruments, so we started out doing twenty-minute jams on stage. We'd all be trying to make ourselves heard, which became the term 'beautiful chaos'.

Is it true that David Bowie was in line to produce your third album, 1982's *Forever Now*?
He expressed interest. We were playing in New York, and Bowie and [Talking Heads frontman] David Byrne burst into the dressing room and said: "We were just arguing about who was going to produce your next album." But neither of them was ever available when we were gearing up for an album.

The Furs song *Pretty In Pink* will forever be associated with the film of the same name. How do you feel about that now?
It's got pluses and minuses. It got us through to a larger market, but it tended to be screaming fourteen-year-old girls with pink T-shirts. It scared off a lot of our hard-core fans. The remake of the single [recorded for the film] isn't anywhere near as good as the original.

> **"This is a reintroduction for people to Furs music."**

How did you come to get involved with the film?
It was [actress] Molly Ringwald. She approached [writer] John Hughes and said: "I like this band. Can you write some sort of movie vehicle around the song?' And he did. Even though the movie's got nothing at all to do with the lyrics.

You've been in a band with your brother for forty years. What's the secret to avoiding sibling bust-ups?
I can't understand all those brothers in bands who fight. Richard and I will have an argument one minute, then five minutes later we're the best of buddies again. Blood's thicker than music.

Former Furs Richard Fortus and Frank Ferrer are currently in Guns N' Roses. Have you asked them for free gig tickets?
Not yet. And not being a huge fan of Guns N' Roses, I don't think it'll happen. **DE**

The tour begins in on September 1.

Danger Danger

Bruno Ravel gets ready for a heavenly night of hair-metal excess.

New Jersey hard rockers Danger Danger are on the bill for the inaugural Hair Metal Heaven Festival which takes place in Hull. Bassist Bruno Ravel sets the scene.

The last time Danger Danger played in the UK was as the final band at the last Firefest, in 2012. That was an emotional night.
It was pretty emotional for me as well. It was the final show of our twenty-fifth-anniversary reunion run, as well as the final Firefest, so I was very aware of what was going on and was taking it all in. It was a great night.

Hair Metal Heaven takes place in the Hull. What do you know about the event?
Honestly? Not much other than that the line-up looks respectable, and I've heard some good things about the promoter.

Which of the bands appearing at the event on the Saturday will you most likely be partying with the most?
Ha! I don't really know any of them personally, except for the TNT guys and a few select others, but I suspect we'll all know each other after that night.

Michael Monroe will receive a special Hall Of Fame award. Do you know him?
I'm a fan but I've never met him. I hope to say hi.

How would you describe Danger Danger's current status? You don't play live often, and the last record is now eight years old.
That's a good question. You could say that we are a reflection of the rock scene – or lack thereof – that exists today. Booking and co-ordinating shows is challenging due to the shrinking market and fan base. I doubt we'll ever record another album. Other than doing so for the fans, there really is no motivating factor. However, we have discussed maybe recording a single song, putting it up on iTunes and taking it from there. As long as we're still a functioning band there's always a chance.

> **"I doubt we'll record another album. There is no motivation."**

You and guitarist Rob Marcello put together The Defiants with former DD singer Paul Laine, and their debut was *Classic Rock*'s AOR album of 2017. Is there more to come from them?
It was a blast making that record. I hope there's another one in me. I must admit it's been really hard for me to get inspired lately, with all the negativity and bullshit that life brings. Hopefully I can pull myself out of my creative rut and get back in the studio.

What *was* Paul Laine on at the Rockingham Festival? Throwing bottles of Jack Daniel's, losing his mic under the drum riser… He seemed unapologetically, uproariously drunk.
That was definitely not one of his better nights. Paul's plan was to have a few drinks before the show to loosen up, and it snowballed on him. Despite his condition he did pretty damned good. **DL**

Hair Metal Heaven takes place on August 26/27.

Korn

The metal heavyweights look forward to three UK shows.

A long way removed from their nu-metal roots, Korn are among the most important bands of the past three decades. Guitarist James 'Munky' Shaffer tells us what to expect as they prepare for the Reading and Leeds Festivals and headlining a London show.

What appeals to Korn about doing Reading and Leeds?
We went to see Rage Against The Machine play at the Reading Festival in 1997 and they were incredible. Not only that, but the crowd's energy was overpowering. So we've always wanted to play there. And finally it's happening.

On your recent US tour your set included a cover of Queen's *We Will Rock You*. Why choose that one?
We put that in the middle of *Coming Undone*. The reason is that I always referred to that song's drum beat as being like the one on *We Will Rock You*, so it seemed logical to put it in.

How hard is it to put together a set-list now you have twelve studio albums?
We have to take into account what every individual member wants, and then we look at research into what the fans are listening to. One rule, though, is that if any band member doesn't enjoy a song, then we drop it.

Is there room for spontaneity in the group's live performances?
I wish there was. But the lighting and sound is so strictly controlled, we can't afford to play fast and loose.

How do you think Korn's sound and style has changed over the years?
We use a lot more colour and texture in the way we construct our songs. In our early days we were angry and pissed off. Now we're a lot more mature, and that comes across in the diversity of what we write about.

Next year is Korn's twenty-fifth anniversary. Any celebration plans?
We want to do something truly special for our fans, to show how much we appreciate the way they've stuck with us. We want something they'll be proud to show their children. Right now that's all I can say. **MD**

Korn play London Brixton Academy on August 23.

DEAN KARR/PRESS

Tour Dates

RYAN ADAMS

Belfast	Ulster Hall	Sep 8
Manchester	Apollo	Sep 14
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Sep 15
Gateshead	The Sage	Sep 17
Leeds	Academy	Sep 18
Bournemouth	Academy	Sep 19
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Sep 21
London	Royal Albert Hall	Sep 22

THE AFGHAN WHIGS

Leeds	Church	Aug 16
Brighton	Concorde 2	Aug 17

AIRBOURNE

Pwllheli	Hard Rock Hell Festival	Nov 10
Bristol	Academy	Nov 11
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 13
Manchester	Academy	Nov 14
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Nov 15
Norwich	UEA	Nov 18
Oxford	Academy	Nov 19
Sheffield	Academy	Nov 20
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 22

ALTER BRIDGE
& THE PARALLAX ORCHESTRA

London	Royal Albert Hall	Oct 2, 3

TORI AMOS

Cork	Opera House	Sep 6
Dublin	Bord Gais	Sep 7
London	Royal Albert Hall	Oct 4
Manchester	Palace Theatre	Oct 5
Glasgow	Academy	Oct 6

ANATHEMA

Glasgow	Garage	Sep 22
Belfast	Limelight	Sep 23
Dublin	Academy	Sep 24
Manchester	The Ritz	Sep 26
Sheffield	The Plug	Sep 27
Bristol	Marble Factory	Sep 28
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Sep 29
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Sep 30

ARCTANGENT FESTIVAL
CONVERGE, TESSERACT, EXPLOSIONS IN THE SKY, MORE

Bristol	Fernhill Farm	Aug 17-19

BAD TOUCH, MOLLIE MARRIOTT

Sheffield	Plug	Nov 9
Leek	Foxlowe Arts Centre	Nov 10
Bristol	Tunnels	Nov 16
Manchester	Ruby Lounge	Nov 17
Newcastle	The Cluny	Nov 18
Nottingham	Bodega	Nov 19
Glasgow	Stereo	Nov 23
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 24
Coventry	Empire	Nov 25
London	Islington Academy	Nov 26
Norwich	Waterfront Studio	Dec 1
Southampton	Talking Heads	Dec 2
Trecco Bay	Planet Rockstock Festival	Dec 3

DAN BAIRD & HOMEMADE SIN

Sheffield	The Greystones	Nov 7
Leicester	The Musician	Nov 8
Glasgow	ABC2	Nov 9
London	Shepherd's Bush Bush Hall	Nov 10
Newcastle	The Cluny	Nov 11
Manchester	Academy 3	Nov 12

JIMMY BARNES

London	Islington Academy	Dec 13
Glasgow	King Tat's Wah Wah Hut	Dec 15
Edinburgh	Pleasance Theatre	Dec 16
Glasgow	Cottiers Theatre	Dec 17
Belfast	Limelight	Dec 19
Dublin	Whelans	Dec 20

MARTIN BARRE BAND

Stockton-on-Tees	The ARC	Nov 2
Derby	Flowerpot	Nov 3
Fletching	Trading Boundaries	Nov 4
Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 5
Preston	Guildhall	Nov 6

ERIC BELL

London	Archway The Lounge	Sep 3

BIG BIG TRAIN

London	Cadogan Hall	Sep 29, 30, Oct 1

BIG BOY BLOATER & THE LIMITS

Cottingham	Folk Festival	Aug 26
Aldershot	West End Centre	Sep 15
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Sep 22

Gravesend	Red Lion	Sep 23
Newbury	Arlington Arts	Sep 30
Nottingham	The Maze	Oct 5
Glasgow	Stereo	Oct 6
Preston	Continental	Oct 7
Birmingham	Dark Horse	Oct 8
Sheffield	The Greystones	Oct 12
Darlington	The Forum	Oct 13

BLONDIE

Manchester	Apollo	Nov 11
Birmingham	Barclaycard Arena	Nov 13
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 14
London	Brixton Academy	Nov 16, 17

BLUESFEST
STEELY DAN, THE DOOBIE BROTHERS, GOV'T MULE, CHRIS ISAAC, MORE

London	O2 Arena	Oct 27-29

BLUESFEST DUBLIN
STEELY DAN, THE DOOBIE BROTHERS

Dublin	3 Arena	Oct 29

ELKIE BROOKS

London	Palladium	Sep 19

BROKEN WITT REBELS

Norwich	Waterfront	Oct 11
London	Shoreditch Old Blue Last	Oct 13
Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	Oct 14
Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 20
Sheffield	Corporation	Oct 21
Glasgow	Stereo	Oct 22
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Oct 23
Birmingham	Academy 3	Oct 30
Southampton	Joiners Arms	Nov 27
Brighton	Prince Albert	Nov 29
Bristol	Thekla	Dec 8
Manchester	Ruby Lounge	Dec 9, 10

BROTHER FIRETRIBE

London	Manette Street Borderline	Oct 21
Nottingham	Rockingham Festival	Oct 22

Recommended

THE CADILLAC THREE,
BROTHERS OSBORNE

Belfast	Mandela Hall	Nov 9
Cardiff	Y Plas	Nov 12
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 13
London	Kentish Town Forum	Nov 14
Norwich	UEA	Nov 15
Birmingham	Academy	Nov 17
Manchester	Academy	Nov 18
Newcastle	Academy	Nov 19
Glasgow	ABC	Nov 20

TO BE RETAINED — ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

CATS IN SPACE

London	The Borderline	Sep 6, 13, 27
Cardiff	The Globe	Sep 12
Nottingham	Rock City Basement	Sep 15
Birmingham	Academy 2	Sep 16
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Sep 17
Brighton	The Haunt	Sep 19
Glasgow	G2	Sep 25
Manchester	Academy 3	Sep 26

MAX & IGGOR CAVALERA RETURN TO ROOTS, OVERKILL, INSOMNIUM, DESERTED FEAR

London	Kentish Town Forum	Dec 12

NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS

Bournemouth	BIC	Sep 24
Manchester	Arena	Sep 25
Glasgow	The Hydro	Sep 27
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Sep 28
London	O2 Arena	Sep 30

CLIMAX BLUES BAND

Wavendon	The Stables	Aug 25

CLITHEROE BLUES FESTIVAL
BERNIE MARSDEN, DR FEELGOOD, DANNY BRYANT, MORE

Clitheroe	The Grand	Oct 15

JOHN COGHLAN'S QUO,
ALAN LANCASTER

Minehead	Butlins Quo Convention	Oct 13-16

PHIL COLLINS

Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 22

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE

Some strange things come out of the desert. This Josh Homme-fronted band is one of them. Go see!

See page 109 for dates, currently Nov 18-24

GETTY

Sheffield	Arena	Nov 24
London	Royal Albert Hall	Nov 26, 27
Manchester	Arena	Nov 29
Glasgow	The Hydro	Dec 1
Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	Dec 2
Birmingham	Genting Arena	Dec 3

ALICE COOPER, THE MISSION, THE TUBES

First Direct	Arena	Nov 11
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 12
Birmingham	Barclaycard Arena	Nov 14
Manchester	Arena	Nov 15
London	Wembley Arena	Nov 16

COVEN

London	Tufnell Park Dome	Sep 11

CRADLE OF FILTH

Belfast	Limelight	Oct 30
Dublin	Academy	Oct 31
Manchester	Academy 2	Nov 2
Glasgow	Garage	Nov 3
Birmingham	Institute 2	Nov 4
Leeds	Church	Nov 5
Oxford	Academy	Nov 7
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Nov 8
Norwich	Waterfront	Nov 9
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Nov 10
Bristol	Bierkeller	Nov 11

THE DAMNED

Newcastle	Academy	Jan 26
Dundee	Caird Hall	Jan 27
Glasgow	Academy	Jan 28
Leeds	Academy	Jan 30
Manchester	Academy	Jan 31
Birmingham	Academy	Feb 1
Leicester	Academy	Feb 3
Nottingham	Rock City	Feb 4
Folkestone	Leas Cliff Hall	Feb 6
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Feb 7
Cardiff	Great Hall	Feb 9
Bristol	Academy	Feb 10
Bournemouth	Academy	Feb 11
Southampton	Guildhall	Feb 13
Bexhill	De La Warr Pavilion	Feb 14
London	Kentish Town Forum	Feb 17

THE DARKNESS

Southampton	Guildhall	Nov 23
Manchester	Academy 1	Nov 24
Blackburn	King George's Hall	Nov 25
Leeds	Academy	Nov 27
Newcastle	Academy	Nov 28
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 29
Stoke-on-Trent	Victoria Hall	Dec 1
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 2
Norwich	UEA	Dec 3
Guildford	G Live	Dec 5
Margate	Winter Gardens	Dec 6
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Dec 7
Birmingham	Academy	Dec 9
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Dec 10
Brighton	Dome	Dec 11
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Dec 13
Bristol	Colston Hall	Dec 14

THE DEAD KENNEDYS

Bournemouth	Old Fire Station	Oct 12
London	Islington Academy	Oct 13, 14

DEEP PURPLE, EUROPE

Birmingham	Barclaycard Arena	Nov 17
Manchester	Arena	Nov 18
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 20
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 22
London	O2 Arena	Nov 23

DIAMOND HEAD

Dublin	Fibber McGee's	Nov 23
Belfast	Voodoo Lounge	Nov 24
Limerick	Dolans Warehouse	Nov 25
Dundee	Beat Generator	Nov 30
Edinburgh	La Belle Angèle	Dec 1
Sheffield	HRH Festival	Dec 2
Bilston	Robin 2	Dec 7
Southampton	The Brook	Dec 8

THE DOOBIE BROTHERS

Dublin	Bluesfest	Oct 28
London	Bluesfest	Oct 29
York	Barbican	Oct 31
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 3
Manchester	Apollo	Nov 4

THE DOWLING POOLE

Worcester	Marrs Bar	Sep 7
Bedford	Esquires	Sep 8
London	Manette Street Borderline	Sep 9

DRAGONFORCE

Glasgow	Garage	Oct 4
Newcastle	Riverside	Oct 5
York	Fibbers	Oct 6
Sheffield	Corporation	Oct 7
Manchester	Sound Control	Oct 8
Birmingham	Academy 2	Oct 11
Cardiff	Globe	Oct 12
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Oct 13
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Oct 14
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Oct 15

ELECTRIC BOYS

Sheffield	Local Authority	Nov 26
Newcastle	The Cluny	Nov 27
Glasgow	ABC 2	Nov 28
Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	Nov 29
Chester	Live Rooms	Nov 30
Porthcawl	Planet Rockstock Festival	Dec 2
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Dec 3
London	Camden Underworld	Dec 4

ELECTRIC WIZARD, ANGEL WITCH, RIDDLES

Bristol	Bierkeller	Aug 17
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Aug 18
Newcastle	Riverside	Aug 19

ENSLAVED

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Nov 24

FEEDER

Chepstow	Racecourse	Aug 25

FIELDS OF THE NEPHILIM

London	Kentish Town Forum	Dec 21

FISH

Leeds	Metropolitan University	Dec 8
Manchester	The Ritz	Dec 9
Leamington	The Assembly	Dec 10

Cardiff	Tramshed	Dec 12
Bristol	Academy	Dec 13
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Dec 15, 16
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Dec 19
Newcastle	Wylam Brewery	Dec 20
Glasgow	ABC	Dec 21

THE FLAMING GROOVIES

Manchester	Ruby Lounge	Sep 19
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Sep 20
London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Sep 21

FM

Sutton-in-Ashfield	The Diamond	Aug 25
Chepstow	Castle Rock	Aug 26

FOCUS

Faversham	New Day Festival	Aug 26
Southampton	The Brook	Oct 5
Tavistock	The Wharf	Oct 6
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 7
Oswestry	Lion Quays Hotel	Oct 8
Wavendon	The Stables	Oct 9
Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 10
Ayr	Gaiety Theatre	Oct 11
Glasgow	The Ferry	Oct 12
Kinross	Green Hotel	Oct 13
Wigan	Old Courts	Oct 14
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 15
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Oct 18
Cardiff	The Globe	Oct 19
Fletching	Trading Boundaries	Oct 20, 21

FOO FIGHTERS

London	O2 Arena	Sep 19

FOREIGNER

Manchester	Apollo	May 12
Glasgow	Clyde Auditorium	May 13
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	May 15
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 16

HENRIK FREISCHLADER

Manchester	Band On The Wall	Sep 19
Bilston	Robin 2	Sep 20
Glasgow	ABC	Sep 21
Derby	Flowerpot	Sep 22
London	Manette Street Borderline	Sep 23
Brighton	Komedia	Sep 24

FROST*

London	Camden Dingwalls	Nov 24

GOOD CHARLOTTE

Southampton	Guildhall	Nov 27
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 28
Glasgow	Barrowland	Nov 30
Birmingham	Academy	Dec 1
Manchester	Academy	Dec 2
London	Brixton Academy	Dec 3

GOV'T MULE

Dublin	Academy	Oct 22
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Oct 24
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 26
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 27
London	O2 Arena Bluesfest	Oct 28

GUN

Glasgow	Barrowland	Dec 2
Manchester	Club Academy	Dec 8
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Dec 9

HAIR METAL HEAVEN
SPREAD EAGLE, TREAT, LEATHERWOLF, TNT, MORE

Hull	City Hall	Aug 25-27

ALBERT HAMMOND & THE LEIPZIG ORCHESTRA

London	Cadogan Hall	Sep 19

HARD ROCK HELL
AIRBOURNE, Y&T, DEE SNIDER, MORE

Pwllheli	Hafan Y Môr Holiday Park	Nov 9-12

HARD ROCK HELL DOOMS VS STONER
MY DYING BRIDE, ORANGE GOBLIN, KADAVAR, MORE

Sheffield	Academy	Sep 30, Oct 1

HARD ROCK HELL NWOBHM
RAVEN, DIAMOND HEAD, LIONHEART, AVENGER, MORE

Sheffield	Academy	Dec 2, 3

HARD ROCK HELL PROG
CARL PALMER'S ELP LEGACY, CARAVAN, FOCUS, MORE

Pwllheli	Hafan Y Môr Holiday Park	Nov 16-19

HARD ROCK HELL SLEAZE
FASTER PUSSYCAT, VAIN, TIGERTAILZ, JIZZY PEARL'S LOVE/HATE, MORE

Sheffield	Academy	Sep 2, 3

THE DARKNESS

Classic Rock Recommends

Hair, catsuits, falsetto vocals, top tunes, guitar solos, entertainment. Are you really gonna go to the pub instead?

See previous page for dates, currently Nov 23 – Dec 14.

KEVIN NIXON

BETH HART

Leeds	Town Hall	Oct 30
Bath	Forum	Nov 1
Coventry	Cathedral	Nov 3
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 4

HAYSEED DIXIE

Devon	Beautiful Days Festival	Aug 19
Farnham	Weyfest Festival	Aug 20

JUSTIN HAYWARD

Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Sep 18
Guildford	G Live	Sep 19
Bournemouth	Pavilion	Sep 20
Barnstaple	Queen's Hall	Sep 22
Worthing	Assembly Halls	Sep 23
Weston-super-Mare	Playhouse	Sep 25
Hull	City Hall	Sep 27
Wrexham	William Aston Hall	Sep 28
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Oct 1
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Oct 2
London	Highbury Union Chapel	Oct 3
Birmingham	Town Hall	Oct 5
St Albans	Arena	Oct 6

HELLOWEEN'S PUMPKINS UNITED

London	Brixton Academy	Nov 14

HIM

Glasgow	Barrowland	Dec 14
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 15
Manchester	Academy	Dec 16
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Dec 17

ILFRACOMBE BLUES FESTIVAL
THE BLUES BAND, THE PRETTY THINGS, SNAKECHARMER, MORE

Ilfracombe	John Fowler Holiday Park	Nov 10-12

ILFRACOMBE PUNK FESTIVAL
RUTS DC, 999, DISCHARGE, MORE

Ilfracombe	John Fowler Holiday Park	Nov 17-19

IN FLAMES, FIVE FINGER DEATH PUNCH

Birmingham	BCA	Dec 17
Glasgow	The Hydro	Dec 18
Leeds	Arena	Dec 20
London	Wembley Arena	Dec 21

Recommended

INGLORIOUS

Farnham	Weyfest Festival	Aug 19
Pontipridd	Uni Arts Centre	Sep 30
Southampton	The Brook	Oct 1
Belfast	Limelight	Oct 3
Dublin	Academy	Oct 4
Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 6
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 7
Newcastle	Academy 2	Oct 8
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Oct 10
York	Fibbers	Oct 11
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 12
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Oct 20

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

INSANE CLOWN POSSE, MUSHROOMHEAD

Glasgow	ABC	Nov 15
Bristol	Academy	Nov 16
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 17
Birmingham	Institute	Nov 18
London	Kentish Town Forum	Nov 19

WILKO JOHNSON, JOHN COOPER CLARKE

London	Royal Albert Hall	Sep 26

THE KENTUCKY HEADHUNTERS, BAD TOUCH

Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 2
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 3
Sheffield	Local Authority	Oct 5
Norwich	Waterfront	Oct 6
London	Boston Music Rooms	Oct 7
Manchester	Club Academy	Oct 8
Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 9
Glasgow	ABC2	Oct 10

THE KILLERS

Birmingham	Genting Arena	Nov 6
Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	Nov 10
Manchester	Arena	Nov 13
Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 16
Belfast	SSE Arena	Nov 17
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 19
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 20
Aberdeen	GE Arena	Nov 21
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 23
Sheffield	Arena	Nov 25
London	O2 Arena	Nov 27, 28

KING KING

Bath	Forum	Oct 14
Birmingham	Town Hall	Oct 17
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 18
Sheffield	Leadmill	Oct 19
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Oct 20

KMFDM

Newcastle	Think Thank	Sep 5
Glasgow	St Luke's	Sep 6
Manchester	Ruby Lounge	Sep 7
Birmingham	Institute	Sep 8
London	Islington Academy	Sep 9
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Sep 10

KORN

London	Brixton Academy	Aug 23

RICHIE KOTZEN

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Sep 1

LAIBACH

London	Islington Academy	Nov 23

MARK LANEGAN BAND

Bristol	Trinity	Nov 27
Norwich	Waterfront	Nov 28
Wolverhampton	Wulfrun Hall	Nov 29
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Nov 30
Liverpool	Academy	Dec 1
Aberdeen	Garage	Dec 3
Edinburgh	Liquid Room	Dec 4

Belfast	Mandela Hall	Dec 5
Dublin	Academy	Dec 6
Leeds	Church	Dec 8
Oxford	Academy	Dec 9
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Dec 10
Brighton	Concorde 2	Dec 11
London	Camden Koko	Dec 12

LEATHERWOLF

Hull	Hair Metal Heaven Festival	Aug 27
Edinburgh	Bannerman's	Aug 28
Evesham	Iron Road	Aug 31
Bognor Regis	The Pier	Sep 1
London	Camden Fiddler's Elbow	Sep 2

THE LEMON TWIGS

Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 10
Sheffield	Leadmill	Nov 11
Glasgow	QMU	Nov 12
Birmingham	Institute 2	Nov 14
London	Kentish Town Forum	Nov 15

LIFE OF AGONY, AARON BUCHANAN & THE CULT CLASSICS

Norwich	Waterfront	Sep 15
Manchester	Gorilla	Sep 16
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Sep 18
Newcastle	Institute	Sep 19
Glasgow	Garage	Sep 20
Birmingham	Institute 2	Sep 21
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Sep 23

LIONHEART, AIRRACE

Cardiff	Fuel	Nov 30
Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	Dec 1
London	Camden Underworld	Dec 2
Sheffield	Academy	Dec 3
Newcastle	The Cluny	Dec 5
Edinburgh	Bannerman's	Dec 6

LIVING COLOUR, STONE BROKEN

Glasgow	Garage	Sep 26
Bilston	Robin 2	Sep 27
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Sep 28
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Sep 29
Manchester	Club Academy	Sep 30
London	Malet Street Student Central	Oct 1
Norwich	Waterfront	Oct 4
Liverpool	Hangar 34	Oct 6
Newcastle	Riverside	Oct 7

LONELY ROBOT, TILT

Manchester	Ruby Lounge	Aug 18
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Aug 19
Bristol	Thekla	Aug 20

LYNCH MOB

Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	Nov 9
Sheffield	Local Authority	Nov 10
London	Islington Academy	Nov 12

ERJA LYYTINEN

Sheffield	The Greystones	Sep 20
Edinburgh	The Caves	Sep 21
Nottingham	Bodega	Sep 22
Chester	Live Rooms	Sep 23
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Sep 24
London	Manette Street Borderline	Sep 25
Bristol	The Tunnels	Sep 26

MANIC STREET PREACHERS

Laverstoke Park Farm	Carfest South	Aug 27
Bingley	Music Live	Sep 1

MARILYN MANSON

Manchester	Apollo	Dec 4
Glasgow	Academy	Dec 5
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Dec 6
Newport	Centre	Dec 8
London	Wembley Arena	Dec 9

MARILLION

London	Royal Albert Hall	Oct 12
London	Palladium	Nov 7
Manchester	Academy	Nov 8

IMELDA MAY

Warrington	Parr Hall	Nov 13
Basingstoke	The Anvil	Nov 14
Southampton	Guildhall	Nov 16
Bedford	Corn Exchange	Nov 17
Hull	City Hall	Nov 19
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Nov 20
London	Royal Albert Hall	Nov 22

MOGWAI

London	Brixton Academy	Dec 15
Glasgow	The Hydro	Dec 16

MARILLION

London	Royal Albert Hall	Oct 13

MASTODON

Cardiff	Great Hall	Dec 2
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Dec 4
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 5

Newcastle	Northumbria University	Dec 6
Glasgow	Barrowland	Dec 7
Manchester	Academy	Dec 9
London	Brixton Academy	Dec 10

JOHN MAYALL

Crawley	The Hawth	Oct 17
Llandudno	Venue Cymru	Oct 18
Stoke-on-Trent	Victoria Hall	Oct 19
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Oct 20
Birmingham	Town Hall	Oct 21
Tunbridge Wells	Assembly Hall	Oct 22
Sheffield	City Hall	Oct 24
Norwich	Theatre Royal	Oct 25
Salisbury	City Hall	Oct 26
Truro	Hall For Cornwall	Oct 27
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Oct 28
Portsmouth	Kings Theatre	Oct 29
York	Grand Opera House	Oct 31
Southport	Theatre	Nov 1
London	Cadogan Hall	Nov 2, 3
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Nov 4
Bristol	Colston Hall	Nov 5
Ipswich	Regent Theatre	Nov 7
Oxford	New Theatre	Nov 8
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Nov 9
Guildford	G Live	Nov 10
Canterbury	Marlowe Theatre	Nov 11
Blackpool	Grand Theatre	Nov 12
Gateshead	The Sage	Nov 14
Halifax	Victoria Theatre	Nov 15
High Wycombe	Swan Theatre	Nov 16
Basingstoke	The Anvil	Nov 17
Dartford	Orchard Theatre	Nov 18
Torquay	Princess Theatre	Nov 19
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Nov 21
Buxton	Opera House	Nov 22
St Albans	Arena	Nov 23
Weston-super-Mare	Playhouse Theatre	Nov 24
Bournemouth	Pavilion Theatre	Nov 25
Folkestone	Leas Cliff Pavilion	Nov 26

SIMON McBRIDE

Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Nov 2
St Helens	Citadel	Nov 3
Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 6
Hull	Fruit	Nov 7
London	Islington Academy	Nov 8
Sheffield	The Greystones	Nov 9
Ilfracombe	Blues Festival	Nov 11
Bristol	The Tunnels	Nov 13

CHANTEL McGREGOR

Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Aug 19
Halifax	Playhouse	Sep 23
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Oct 5
St Helens	Citadel	Oct 6
Aberdeen	Café Drummond	Oct 20
Inverness	Ironworks	Oct 21
Glasgow	ABC 2	Oct 22
Morecambe	The Platform	Oct 27
Keighley	The Octagon	Oct 28
Bristol	The Tunnels	Dec 10
Derby	Flowerpot	Dec 14
Barton-upon-Humber	Ropery Hall	Dec 15
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Dec 16

THE MELVINS, RED KROSS

Bristol	Exchange	Oct 9
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Oct 10
Glasgow	SWG3	Oct 11
Manchester	Gorilla	Oct 12
Birmingham	Institute 2	Oct 13
London	Camden Electric Brixton	Oct 31

METALLICA, KVELERTAK

London	O2 Arena	Oct 22, 24
Glasgow	The Hydro	Oct 26
Manchester	Arena	Oct 28
Birmingham	Genting Arena	Oct 30

MIKE + THE MECHANICS

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 10

MOTORPSYCHO

London	Islington Academy	Oct 23

MR. BIG, THE ANSWER, FASTER PUSSYCAT

Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 16
Newcastle	Northumbria University	Nov 17
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Nov 19
Manchester	Academy	Nov 21
Glasgow	ABC	Nov 22
Wolverhampton	Wulfrun Hall	Nov 23

NAZARETH

London	Great Portland Street 229 Club	Oct 13
Norwich	UEA	Oct 14

A NEW DAY FESTIVAL
URIAH HEEP, BARCLAY JAMES HARVEST, EDGAR BROUGHTON, MORE

Faversham	Mount Ephraim Gardens	Aug 25-27

NEW FOUND GLORY

Cardiff	Tramshed	Sep 20

GETTY

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

QUEEN + ADAM LAMBERT

It's Queen. With Adam Lambert. You know the songs. What else do you need to know?

See below for dates, currently Nov 25 - Dec 15.

Oxford	Academy	Sep 21
Norwich	UEA	Sep 22
London	Kentish Town Forum	Sep 23
Portsmouth	Pyramid Centre	Sep 25
Newcastle	Academy	Sep 28
Manchester	Academy	Sep 29
Birmingham	Academy	Sep 30
Leeds	Academy	Oct 2
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 3
Bristol	Academy	Oct 5
London	Kentish Town Forum	Oct 6
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Oct 7
London	Camden Underworld	Oct 8

OPETH, ENSLAVED

Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 15
Glasgow	Barrowland	Nov 16
Belfast	Limelight	Nov 17
Dublin	Academy	Nov 18
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 19
Bristol	Academy	Nov 21
Birmingham	Institute	Nov 22

PAPA ROACH

Birmingham	Academy	Oct 5
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 6
Glasgow	Academy	Oct 7
London	Brixton Academy	Oct 10
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 11

PARADISE LOST, PALLBEARER

London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Nov 3

THE PINEAPPLE THIEF

London	Malet Street Student Central	Sep 16
Bristol	Bierkeller	Sep 17

PLACEBO

Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Oct 7
Dundee	Caird Hall	Oct 8
Doncaster	Dome	Oct 10
Blackpool	Empress Ballroom	Oct 11
Reading	Rivermead Centre	Oct 13
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Oct 14
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Oct 16
Swindon	Oasis Leisure Centre	Oct 17
Plymouth	Pavilions	Oct 20
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Oct 21
London	Brixton Academy	Oct 23, 24

THE PRETENDERS

Newcastle	City Hall	Sep 30
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 1
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Oct 3
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 4
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Oct 6
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Oct 7
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Oct 8
Brighton	Dome	Oct 10
Bristol	Colston Hall	Oct 11
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 13
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Oct 14
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 15
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Oct 17
Oxford	New Theatre	Oct 18

CHUCK PROPHET

London	ULU Folk And Roots Festival	Nov 28
Hebden Bridge	Trades Club	Nov 18

Edinburgh	Belle Angele	Nov 19
Cardiff	Club Ifor Bach	Nov 20

Recommended

PSYCHEDELIC FURS, LENE LOVICH

Glasgow	Academy	Sep 1
Leeds	Academy	Sep 2
Manchester	The Ritz	Sep 3
Birmingham	Institute	Sep 5
Bristol	Academy	Sep 6
Brighton	Concorde 2	Sep 7
London	Kentish Town Forum	Sep 9
Oxford	Academy	Sep 10
Norwich	UEA	Sep 11

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

PSYCHIC TV

London	Islington Academy	Nov 9

QUEEN + ADAM LAMBERT

Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 25
Belfast	SSE Arena	Nov 26
Liverpool	Echo Arena	Nov 28
Birmingham	Barclaycard Arena	Nov 30
Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	Dec 1
Glasgow	The Hydro	Dec 3
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Dec 5
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Dec 6
Sheffield	Motorpoint Arena	Dec 8
Manchester	Arena	Dec 9
London	O2 Arena	Dec 12
London	Wembley Arena	Dec 15

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE

London	Wembley Arena	Nov 18
Manchester	Arena	Nov 19
London	O2 Arena	Nov 21
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Nov 23
Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 24

QUIREBOYS, FM, GUN

Chepstow	Castle	Aug 26

THE RASMUS

London	King's Cross Scala	Nov 19

CHRIS REA

Newcastle	City Hall	Nov 20
Gateshead	The Sage	Nov 22
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Nov 23
Harrogate	International Centre	Nov 25
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 26
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Nov 27, 29
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Dec 1
Manchester	Apollo	Dec 3
Sheffield	City Hall	Dec 5
Belfast	Waterfront	Dec 8
Oxford	New Theatre	Dec 10
Brighton	Centre	Dec 11
Bournemouth	BIC	Dec 13

READING AND LEEDS FESTIVALS
MUSE, AT THE DRIVE-IN, MORE

Reading	Richfield Avenue	Aug 25-27
Leeds	Bramham Park	Aug 25-27

DAN REED (UNPLUGGED)

London	St Pancras Old Church	Sep 14
Salford	Sacred Trinity Church	Sep 15
Newcastle	Cluny 2	Sep 16
Beeston	Greyhound	Sep 17

ROCKINGHAM FESTIVAL
VINCE NEIL, LOVERBOY, MORE

Nottingham	Trent University	Oct 20-22

ROYAL BLOOD, AT THE DRIVE IN

Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 13
Reading	Rivermead Centre	Nov 14
Manchester	Arena	Nov 16
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 17
Birmingham	Barclaycard Arena	Nov 18
London	Alexandra Palace	Nov 20-22
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 24
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 25
Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 26
Bournemouth	BIC	Nov 28
Brighton	Centre	Nov 29

JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR, DAN PATLANSKY

Gateshead	The Sage	Nov 7
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Nov 9
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Nov 10
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Nov 12
Bristol	Colston Hall	Nov 14
London	Royal Festival Hall	Nov 15
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Nov 20

MICHAEL SCHENKER FEST, DEPARTED

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Nov 2
Sheffield	Academy	Nov 3
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 4
Hull	City Hall	Nov 5

SEETHER

London	Kentish Town Forum	Oct 15
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 16
Glasgow	ABC	Oct 17
Birmingham	Institute	Oct 18

KENNY WAYNE SHEPHERD

Bournemouth	Mr Kyps	Oct 27
London	Bluesfest	Oct 27
Leamington Spa	Assembly Rooms	Oct 30
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 31
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 1

SHELLAC

Galway	Roisin Dubh	Sep 29
Dublin	Tivol	Sep 30
Belfast	Black Box	Oct 1
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Oct 3
Glasgow	SWG3	Oct 4
Manchester	Academy 2	Oct 5
Birmingham	Asylum	Oct 6
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Oct 7
Brighton	Concorde 2	Oct 9
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Oct 10

SKID ROW

Dublin	Academy	Mar 2
Belfast	Limelight	Mar 3
Glasgow	ABC	Mar 5
Inverness	Iron Works	Mar 6
Newcastle	Academy	Mar 7
Sheffield	Corporation	Mar 9
Pwllheli	Hard Rock Hell Festival	Mar 10
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Mar 11
Hull	Welly	Mar 12
Manchester	Academy 2	Mar 14
Cardiff	University	Mar 15
Liverpool	Hangar 34	Mar 16
Coventry	Kasbah	Mar 17
Norwich	Waterfront	Mar 19
Bristol	Academy	Mar 20
Brighton	Concorde 2	Mar 21
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 22

SKID ROW, NIGHT RANGER

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Mar 11

SPARKS

Norwich	Waterfront	Sep 18
Newcastle	Boiler Room	Sep 19
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Sep 20
Manchester	The Ritz	Sep 22
Nottingham	Rock City	Sep 23
Birmingham	Institute	Sep 24
Bristol	Academy	Sep 26
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Sep 27, 28

SQUEEZE, NINE BELOW ZERO

Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 7
Milton Keynes	Theatre	Oct 9
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Oct 10
Brighton	Dome	Oct 12
Bristol	Colston Hall	Oct 13
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Oct 14
Bournemouth	Pavilion	Oct 16
Guildford	G Live	Oct 17
Ipswich	Regent	Oct 19

Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 20
Reading	Hexagon Theatre	Oct 23
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Oct 24
Sheffield	City Hall	Oct 26
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Oct 27
Harrogate	International Centre	Oct 28
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Oct 30
Gateshead	The Sage	Nov 2
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Nov 3
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Nov 4
London	Royal Albert Hall	Nov 6

STATUS QUO

Manchester	Apollo	Nov 26
Sheffield	City Hall	Nov 27
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Nov 29
Reading	Hexagon	Nov 30
Bournemouth	BIC	Dec 2
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Dec 3
Glasgow	Clyde Auditorium	Dec 5
Newcastle	City Hall	Dec 6
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Dec 8

STIFF LITTLE FINGERS

Devon	Beautiful Days Festival	Aug 18
Blackburn	King George's Hall	Aug 19
Chester	Live Rooms	Aug 20
Edinburgh	Liquid Room	Aug 22
Cork	City Hall	Aug 24
Dublin	Academy	Aug 25
Belfast	Custom House Square	Aug 26

STONE SOUR, THE PRETTY RECKLESS

Birmingham	Barclaycard Arena	Nov 29
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 30
Brighton	Centre	Dec 1
London	Brixton Academy	Dec 4, 6
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Dec 5
Glasgow	The Hydro	Dec 8

SUMMER'S END FESTIVAL
FROST*, THE TANGENT, SOUTHERN EMPIRE, MASCHINE, MORE

Chepstow	Drill Hall	Oct 6-8

SUPERSUCKERS

Brighton	Patterns	Oct 8
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Oct 9
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Oct 10
Manchester	Ruby Lounge	Oct 11
London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Oct 12
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Oct 15

THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT

Chester	Live Rooms	Nov 6
York	The Crescent	Nov 7
Hull	Fruit	Nov 8
Stoke-on-Trent	Sugarmill	Nov 9
Leicester	Dryden Street Social	Nov 11
Wolverhampton	Newhampton Arts Centre	Nov 12
Cardiff	Club Ifor Bach	Nov 14
Plymouth	The Hub	Nov 15
Brighton	The Haunt	Nov 16
Colchester	Arts Centre	Nov 17
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Nov 19
London	Manette Street Borderline	Nov 20
Dover	Booking Hall	Nov 21
Aldershot	West End Centre	Nov 24

RICHARD THOMPSON

Brighton	Dome	Oct 11
Guildford	G-Live	Oct 12
Poole	Lighthouse	Oct 13
Bristol	Colston Hall	Oct 14
Cardiff	Millennium Centre	Oct 15
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Oct 17
Gateshead	The Sage	Oct 18
Salford	The Lowry	Oct 19
Saffron Walden	Saffron Hall	Oct 21
Coventry	Warwick Arts Centre	Oct 22
Sheffield	City Hall	Oct 25
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Oct 26
Basingstoke	The Anvil	Oct 27
Norwich	Theatre Royal	Oct 28
London	Bridge Theatre	Oct 23, 30

THRESHOLD, DAMNATION ANGELS, DAY SIX

London	Islington Academy	Dec 10

THUNDER

Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Dec 15, 16

TIGERTAILZ

Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Sep 16

ROB TOGNIONI BAND

Blakeney	Harbour Rooms	Aug 25
Colne	Great British Blues Festival	Aug 26
Nantwich	Rory Gallagher Festival	Aug 27
Market Warsop	Black Market	Aug 28
Evesham	Iron Road	Aug 29
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Aug 31
Eire	Harvest Blues Festival	Sep 1-3
Bullingdon	Haven Club	Sep 5
London	Camden Blues Kitchen	Sep 6

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

STEVE VAN ZANDT

Springsteen's E Street Band guitarist puts the spotlight on himself for a change at a gig near you.

See below for dates, currently Nov 4-16.

KEVIN NIXON

Blackpool	Kite Club	Sep 7
Hastings	Big Green Cardigan Festival	Sep 8
Devizes	Long Street Blues Club	Sep 9

TOTO

London	Royal Albert Hall	Apr 1
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Apr 2
Dublin	Vicar Street	Apr 4
Belfast	Waterfront Auditorium	Apr 7
Glasgow	SEC Armadillo	Apr 8

TOUCHSTONE

Pwllheli	Hard Rock Hell Prog	Nov 18
Leicester	The Musician	Nov 25

TRAIN

Sheffield	City Hall	Oct 16
Newcastle	Academy	Oct 17
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 19
Glasgow	Academy	Oct 20
Birmingham	Academy	Oct 21
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Oct 23

WALTER TROUT, SARI SCHORR & THE ENGINE ROOM

Southampton	The Brook	Oct 9
London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Oct 10, 11
Wrexham	William Aston Hall	Oct 13
Wakefield	Warehouse 23	Oct 14
Preston	Guildhall	Oct 15
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 17
Harpenden	Public Hall	Oct 18
Bristol	Bierkeller Theatre	Oct 20
Swansea	Sin City	Oct 21
Pontypridd	Muni Arts Centre	Oct 22

Recommended

ROBIN TROWER

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Nov 29

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

THE TUBES

Southampton	Engine Rooms	Nov 4
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Nov 5
Reading	Sub 89	Nov 6
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Nov 9
Edinburgh	Liquid Room	Nov 10

MARTIN TURNER EX-WISHBONE ASH

Faversham	A New Day Festival	Aug 26
Banbury	The Mill	Sep 15
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Sep 16
Oswestry	Lion Quays Hotel	Sep 17
Hull	Fruit Space	Sep 22
Knaresborough	Frazer Theatre	Sep 23
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 4
Runcorn	The Brindley	Oct 5
Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 6
Worthing	Pier	Oct 12
Hertford	Corn Exchange	Oct 13
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Oct 14
Cardiff	The Globe	Oct 20
Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Oct 21
Birmingham	St Paul's	Oct 26

Hockley	Touchline Live	Oct 27
Haverhill	Arts Centre	Oct 28
Wokingham	Music Club	Nov 3

TYKETTO

Pwllheli	Hard Rock Hell	Nov 10
Sheffield	Corporation	Nov 11
Manchester	Club Academy	Nov 12
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Nov 13
Troon	Winter Storm Festival	Nov 24
Edinburgh	La Belle Angele	Nov 25
Newcastle	The Cluny	Nov 26

UFO

Southampton	The Brook	Sep 12
Dorking	Dorking Halls	Sep 14
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Sep 15
Northampton	Roadmender	Sep 16

FOY VANCE

Manchester	RNCM	Oct 28
Glasgow	Saint Luke's	Oct 29, 30
Dublin	Olympia	Oct 31
London	Highbury Union Chapel	Nov 2-4

STEVE VAN ZANDT

London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Nov 4
Bristol	Academy	Nov 6
Leeds	Academy	Nov 8
Birmingham	Academy	Nov 10
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 12
Liverpool	Academy	Nov 14
Newcastle	Academy	Nov 16

VEGA

Bilston	Robin 2	Sep 21
Norwich	Waterfront	Sep 22
London	Malet Street Student Central	Sep 23
Manchester	Academy	Sep 28
Newcastle	Riverside	Sep 29
Sheffield	The Foundry	Sep 30

SUZANNE VEGA

Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Sep 22
Gateshead	The Sage	Sep 23
Bristol	Colston Hall	Sep 24
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Sep 26
Brighton	Dome	Sep 27
London	Palladium	Sep 28
Manchester	Bridgwater Hall	Sep 30
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Oct 1
Oxford	New Theatre	Oct 2

VENOM INC

Dublin	Voodoo Lounge	Nov 10
Glasgow	Audio	Nov 11
Manchester	Ruby Lounge	Nov 12
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Nov 13
London	Camden Underworld	Nov 14

VON HERTZEN BROTHERS

Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Nov 5
Manchester	Rebellion	Nov 6
Sheffield	Leadmill	Nov 7
Newcastle	Think Tank	Nov 9
Glasgow	G2	Nov 10
Pwllheli	Hard Rock Hell	Nov 11
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Nov 12
Norwich	Waterfront Studio	Nov 14

Southampton	Talking Heads	Nov 15
London	Highbury Garage	Nov 16
Pwllheli	HRH Prog 6	Nov 17
Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	Nov 18

VOODOO SIX

London	Camden Underworld	Sep 8
Nottingham	Rock City Basement	Sep 14
Manchester	Rebellion	Sep 15
Sheffield	Corporation	Sep 16
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Sep 17
Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	Sep 20
Newcastle	The Cluny	Sep 21
Edinburgh	Bannerman's	Sep 22
Glasgow	Cathouse	Sep 23
Southampton	Talking Heads	Sep 28
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Sep 29
Swansea	Garage	Sep 30

W.A.S.P.

Hastings	White Rock Pavilion	Oct 12
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 13
Leeds	Academy	Oct 14
Newcastle	Academy	Oct 15
Glasgow	ABC	Oct 16
Belfast	Limelight	Oct 18
Dublin	Academy	Oct 19
Wolverhampton	Wulfrun Hall	Oct 22
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 21
Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 22
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 24
Bristol	Academy	Oct 25
Norwich	UEA	Oct 26
London	Kentish Town Forum	Oct 27

WEDNESDAY 13

Manchester	Club Academy	Oct 26
Glasgow	Garage	Oct 27
London	Islington Academy	Oct 28

WEEZER

Leeds	Academy	Oct 23
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 25
Birmingham	Academy	Oct 27
London	Wembley Arena	Oct 28

WHITBY BLUES FESTIVAL
BERNIE MARSDEN, DR FEELGOOD, DANNY BRYANT, MORE

Whitby	Pavilion	Oct 14

STEVEN WILSON

Coventry	Warwick Arts Centre	Mar 15
Belfast	Mandela Hall	Mar 17
Dublin	Olympia Theatre	Mar 19
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Mar 21
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Mar 22
Glasgow	Clyde Auditorium	Mar 24
Gateshead	The Sage	Mar 25
London	Royal Albert Hall	Mar 27, 28
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Mar 31, Apr 1

WISHBONE ASH

Wavendon	The Stables	Oct 17
Dorking	Dorking Halls	Oct 18
London	Islington Academy	Oct 19
Aberdare	Coliseum Theatre	Oct 20
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Oct 21
Swindon	Arts Centre	Oct 22
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Oct 24
Southampton	The Brook	Oct 25
Wimborne	Tivoli Theatre	Oct 26
Plymouth	The Hub	Oct 27
Newmarket	King Edward Hall	Oct 29
Hunstanton	Princess Theatre	Oct 31
Wirral	Floral Pavilion Hall	Nov 2
Buckley	Tivoli	Nov 3
Whitby	Pavilion	Nov 4
Salford	The Lowry	Nov 5
Derby	Flowerpot	Nov 7
Kendal	Bootleggers	Nov 9
Edinburgh	Jam House	Nov 10
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Nov 11
Glasgow	The Ferry	Nov 12
Morpeth	Riverside Lodge	Nov 14
Stockton-on-Tees	The ARC	Nov 15
Blackpool	The Layton	Nov 16
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Nov 17
Clitheroe	The Grand	Nov 18

ANDREW W.K.

Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Nov 9
London	Kentish Town Forum	Nov 10
Cardiff	Great Hall	Nov 11
Norwich	Waterfront	Nov 12
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 13
Glasgow	Garage	Nov 14
Birmingham	Academy 2	Nov 15

WOLFSBANE

Winchester	The Railway	Dec 15
Edinburgh	Bannerman's	Dec 16
Birmingham	Asylum	Dec 17
London	Islington Academy	Dec 21
Pontypool	The Dragonfly	Dec 22
Bolton	Bar Metro Rocks	Dec 23

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'Trujillo's bass delivers lines so heavy he can barely lift it.'

Hard-wired: Hammett and Hetfield show Quebec who's boss.

RENAUD PHILIPPE

SÉBASTIEN DION

Metallica

Festival d'Ete Quebec, Quebec City, Canada

Seek and destroy: the metal titans bring their fan-pleasing thrash-country-metal mix to the masses in a kick-ass show.

★ "It comes to life!" reads the legend emblazoned across Kirk Hammett's guitar, a rendering of the 1932 movie poster for Boris Karloff's *The Mummy*. He's not wrong. For 11 days every July, the quaint/modern streets of Quebec City are reanimated.

This year the sports bars, Irish theme pubs and chic brasseries of the walled old town, a place that 'borrows' history from 17th-century France, fill with the relieved parents of the pop kids dropped off at P!NK for the night. Even several hours' drive out of town, the day-trippers going whale watching out of Baie-Sainte-Catherine are chattering about the previous night's Gorillaz set.

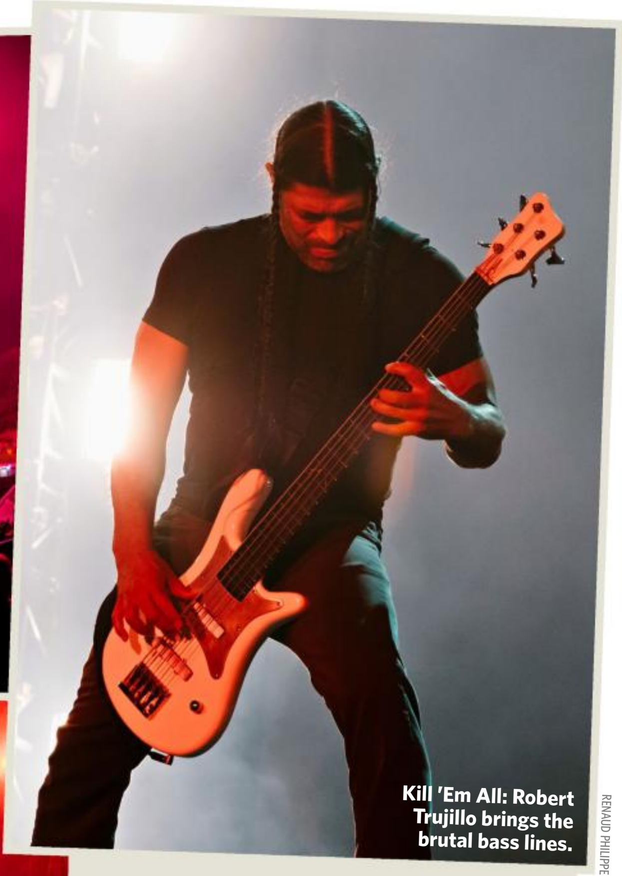
Out on the Plains Of Abraham (as the large grass bowl on the outskirts of the Old Town is poetically known), 100,000 excitable French-Canadians stretch forever up the hill, a Woodstock of a crowd awaiting Metallica, the biggest draw of this year's 10-day Festival d'Ete Quebec.

On Sunday night, Muse will prove themselves worthy successors to the hard-rock headliner throne with a tight and dynamic set of operatic tech-rock heavy hitters. But on Friday night, James Hetfield and co. pull in one of the biggest crowds in the festival's 50-year history. Internal rifts between the various band members permitting, there's clearly plenty of life in these old Cerberuses yet.

At 9.30pm, the Plains come alight. Red LED dots flash on the badges on thousands upon thousands of festival-goers' chests, like a warning to the rib cage of damage to come, or a Coldplay gig in the Seventh Circle. Footage from *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly* plays out on the back-of-stage screen as The Mad, The Evil, The Suave And The Ponytailed take to the stage and crank up *Hardwired* and *Atlas, Rise!*, the opening one-two of last year's *Hardwired… To Self-Destruct* album.

Out on the wing beneath the monstrous screen image of himself, Hammett savages his Mummy guitar as if skinning it alive. Ulrich drums like the devil is at his back, Robert Trujillo delivers bass lines so filthy they seem to have rotted his bass, and so heavy he can barely lift it inches above the stage floor. James Hetfield rips power chords from his Flying V like you or I rip pages from a Tory manifesto. All four of them have rock faces identical to their sex faces, and they're here to "celebrate life through music with the Metallica family of Quebec City".

RENAUD PHILIPPE

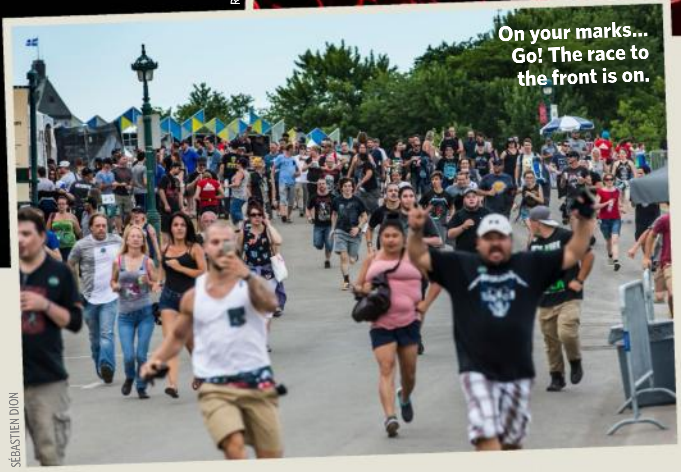


Kill 'Em All: Robert Trujillo brings the brutal bass lines.

RENAUD PHILIPPE

RENAUD PHILIPPE

Screen idol: Hetfield takes the limelight.



On your marks... Go! The race to the front is on.

SÉBASTIEN DION

Which, in Metallica terms, means commemorating a whole heap of death while they're at it. An entire killing spree of crows fills the screens as the deathly chunder of *For Whom The Bell Tolls* strikes up, accompanied by trench warfare visuals. Monochrome images of flesh and desecration augur the arrival of doom-western tune *The Unforgiven*, the tale of a whipping boy tormented to his death by unknown captors that sounds like Jon Bon Jovi, were he a little more, y'know, sacrificial.

"If you wanna live forever, then first you must die!" Hetfield yells with the counter-intuitive logic of the vaguely religious as they launch into newie *Now That We're Dead*, a glam-bam groove that ends with all four band members playing gigantic Aztec witch doctor drums, like the world's biggest Glastonbury drum circle. Which rather says to all those Afrobeat indie singers (singers with a token snare drum): "Come sing with the big boys."

For all this talk about destruction, it's a wonder that Metallica show no signs of encroaching demise. After decades at each other's throats and managing about as much stylistic development as the *Fast And Furious* franchise that whole time, they're as robust a concern as ever. *Hardwired* is their sixth US No.1 album in a row, and their live concoction of ponderous war metal, slaughterhouse thrash, country noir and oxyacetylene soloing is so road-tightened and lacking in self-indulgence that it's as crowd-pleasing as any U2 *Joshua Tree* anniversary show.

Also, their steadfast adherence to an uncompromising formula has made them, and metal in general, ultra-resistant to becoming a nostalgia concern. The thrash roar of the new album's *Moth Into Flame* – about "fame and how it can really fuck you up… we've lost some people recently because of that" – melts easily into 1988's *Harvester Of Sorrow*, essentially the stomp of a Serial Killer Pride march.

Their core menace cuts through the ages, made all the more timeless and intangible by spates of Cure atmospherics on *Welcome Home (Sanitarium)* – an insanity anthem that ends like a flume of magma from the PA – and bursts of amphetamine thrash like *Whiplash*, the sound of a maniac chanting limericks in a blitzkrieg, for which Hetfield dons a leather jacket covered in punk band patches, like the guy with his own stool by the jukebox of any biker bar. The men of Metallica may wither, but their music growls eternal.

As the melodies grow cuddlier, the show grows more savage. Hetfield promises Quebec some "heavy songs", blood-red lasers strafe the sky, an *Apocalypse Now* of bombs and helicopters fills the arena and firecrackers burst like gunfire across the front of the stage. It all introduces the epic *One,* and come *Master Of Puppets* (the proto-*Sandman*, if you will) and *Seek & Destroy*, someone's turned the bass up to 'extinction event'.

"Are you alive?" Hetfield yowls during a scalp-tightening encore of *Fight Fire With Fire*. "Show me!"

At this, the crowd comes to life, howling like a 100,000-strong pack of wolverines, much to Hetfield's mischievous delight. It all ends with Hammett gracefully fingering the arpeggios of *Nothing Else Matters* as green lasers pierce the air, and the inevitable *Enter Sandman*, the angriest song ever written about going up sleepy mountain to beddy-bye cottage. Or, more likely, death. Because just as Quebec City was reborn in the hellforge of rock tonight, Metallica absolutely killed it.

> **'There's clearly plenty of life in the old Cerberuses yet.'**

Words: **Mark Beaumont** Photos: **Renaud Philippe & Sébastien Dion**

> 'Biff Byford eats festival crowds like this one for breakfast.'

Black Star Riders: a set of rousing, melodic, twin-guitar anthems.

Glenn Hughes: a dazzling performance.

ZZ Top: a supreme trio, gliding through their vast catalogue.

Ramblin' Man Fair

Mote Park, Maidstone, Kent

The weather may not have been fair for Ramblin' Man, but the rock'n'roll won out over the rain.

Saxon: a set that drips with quality.

FRIDAY

"Where is everybody?" asks **Graham Bonnet**, resplendent in a fluorescent pink jacket. With existing ticket holders expected to pay for a last-minute additional day in 2017 and the rain tipping it down at 4.20 on a Friday afternoon, it's no wonder the attendance is somewhat thin. However, there's no doubt that the ex-Rainbow/MSG/Alcatrazz singer is in fine voice.

No Ronnie James Dio holograms are necessary as **Last In Line** dust down a set of Dio standards, plus a smattering of self-penned songs you feel like you know but aren't entirely sure.

With rhythm guitarist John Nymann sidelined with viral vertigo, **Y&T** perform as a trio for the first time in their 42-year history. *Hurricane*, *Black Tiger* and *Rescue Me* still sound wonderful, and a potential banana skin is sidestepped with consummate ease.

The rain holds off until the conclusion of a headline set from **Saxon** that drips with quality. Biff Byford eats festival crowds like this one for breakfast, and we laugh aloud at the sheer ludicrousness of statements such as: "Will someone please change my fucking microphone? This one's not loud enough!" Like he did on this stage last year, Byford throws away the set-list as vintage gems such as the rarely performed *Machine Gun* rub shoulders with a smattering of the band's finest latter-day standouts.

SATURDAY

The Dirty Thrills open the Grooverider stage on Saturday and show they're a coming force. Their power and frenetic thirst for the blues proves to be unstoppable, and by the end of their short set, they've got a decent crowd hanging on every note.

Opening the main stage, **Jared James Nichols** has a confident strut, combining influences from Rory Gallagher and Mountain. A cover of the latter's *Mississippi Queen* is an appealing way to finish the set.

Straight out of Nashville, **Caitlin Koch** has Barbie doll looks and a powerful voice. *Run To The River* is a pleasant enough advert for her smooth, saccharine flavoured country-pop, but what she peddles is ultimately rather soulless.

Putting the groove into the Grooverider Stage, **Lionize** sound fulsome and fruity, though the singer's bulging one-piece gold outfit makes him resemble a superhero on the way to a Weight Watchers meeting.

Toseland are quickly building an enviable reputation as one of the best young British bands around. Their fiery performance here underlines their position of strength. And *We'll Stop At Nothing*, which has been chosen as the Special Olympics theme, is a blazing anthem.

Jessica Lynn has the personality and sizzle factor lacked by Caitlin Koch, and not only does it look like she actually knows her bandmates, but it also appears that they've probably enjoyed some nights out together. The vibe is contagious.

The Picturebooks are truly bonkers. How else can you explain why the primitive combination of vocalist/guitarist Fynn Claus Grabke and drummer Philipp Mirtschink is almost orchestral in its sweep? Outrageously oddball, this duo are a live phenomenon.

Anyone who thinks **British Lion** are merely a vanity project for Iron Maiden's Steve Harris isn't paying attention to the reality. This is a nuts-and-bolts hard rock band, who have in frontman Richard Taylor a personality who's the equal of Harris. Even the steady rain can't dampen the crowd's genuine enthusiasm.

Whiskeydick are unstoppable these days. The Texan pair begin with a breathless bluegrass kick and build from there. It's a manic performance that holds the attention, and the definition of outlaw country.

Away from the Tenacious D mothership, **Kyle Gass** shows he's a talent in his own right. His humour and musicianship meld impressively in a style that's predicated in his relaxed stoner efforts, and his band are certainly no faceless automatons.

Ghoultown have a country flair combined with songs that draw heavily from the horror genre. They could easily have been the house band for one of Sergio Leone's spaghetti westerns, and they get a huge reaction from a clearly dedicated and packed audience for their undead yee-haw monster mash.

The incessant rain ensures that **Reef** are just for the diehards, and although bassist Jack Bessant's 'crazy wildman of the woods' look is slightly off-putting, their Top 10 hit *Place Your Hands* incites much gyration; ditto another of their best-known songs, *Yer Old* – mightily appropriate in these surroundings.

Over on the Grooverider stage, Iceland's foremost classic rock youths **The Vintage Caravan** aren't about to be deterred by a bit of rain. Okay, a *lot* of rain. "Fuck the rain!" bassist Alexander Örn Númason cries gleefully as the trio groove, shimmy and strut through one of the weekend's most infectiously enthused sets.

Graham Bonnett (right): in fine voice.

If the notion of a Finnish bluegrass covers band seems daft, then **Steve 'N' Seagulls** make it appear like the most natural style in the world. Opening with Maiden's *The Trooper*, they fiddle their way through a set that also includes GN'R's *You Could Be Mine* and Metallica's *Seek And Destroy*. Enjoyable hoedown hokum.

A late-afternoon performance from **Glenn Hughes** dazzles just like those high-vis pearly gnashers. At almost 65, the Voice Of Rock has no right to look nor sound this good, and despite pockets of vocal showboating, those usual excesses are reeled in. A mix of solo tracks and standards from Purple, Hughes-Thrall and Black Country Communion wraps with a formidable romp through *Burn*.

Dokken's almost comically threadbare attempt at *Don't Close Your Eyes*, *The Hunter* and *Kiss Of Death* are rendered all the more tragic in the wake of Hughes' masterclass. After just a handful of numbers, *Classic Rock* has to walk away. Everything in life has a sell-by date. For Don Dokken's voice, on this evidence, it appears that point is long gone.

Dan Baird & Homemade Sin have the huge disadvantage of being without Baird himself, who is in hospital. But the remaining Sinners pull together with admirable professionalism. Guitarist Warner E Hodges steps up to the plate and leads the band with humour and class. It also helps that everyone in the Outlaw Country tent is on their side, willing the trio to triumph over adversity. They do.

Following a recent tour on which they performed a solitary Thin Lizzy song, would **Black Star Riders** buckle under the pressure of satisfying a festival crowd – especially one soaked to the skin? The answer is 'yes', though besides *The Boys Are Back In Town*, only *Whiskey In The Jar* is wheeled back out to complete a set of rousing, melodic, twin-guitar anthems born of varying degrees of Irish parentage. ⊳

> **'At almost 65, Glenn Hughes has no right to look nor sound this good.'**

Monster Truck: expect massive strides towards major status imminently.

Extreme: a good start, but an overlong set.

Reef: the rain didn't dampen their spirits.

Grooverider headliners **Rival Sons** have spent much of the last year or two opening for rock royalty (first Deep Purple, then Black Sabbath), and it shows – in a really good way. Well versed in winning over audiences that aren't solely theirs, they're bang on the money, from the rock'n'soul swagger of *Hollow Bones* through to uproarious closer *Keep On Swinging*. Beloved ballad *Jordan* is sublime, the boot-stomping likes of *Torture* are rich and more-ish, and Jay Buchanan holds the stage with an easy, confident presence. And guitarist Scott Holiday – all twirly moustache, sharp suit and fearsome Firebird chops – is just effortlessly cool.

Kenny Wayne Shepherd is sensational. You can argue that he channels the blues a lot more than country, but who cares about this sort of definition? The fact is that his set is reminiscent of classic-era Mahogany Rush – it's virtuosity mixed with joy. Songs like *Deja Voodoo* are charismatic jaw-droppers, and the climactic version of Hendrix's *Voodoo Child (Slight Return)* is one of the weekend's standouts.

Extreme make a very good start, of that there's no doubt. However, their set is overlong and lacks depth of quality. Any band that closes with Queen's *We Are The Champions* had better be very special indeed, but Extreme are merely ordinary and there really is no legitimate reason for them to top the bill at an event like this. Of course, potential headliners are dropping like flies, but this was an exercise in wishful thinking.

SUNDAY

On the Rising Stage a year ago, **Stone Broken** are perhaps a little too close to Nickelback or Black Stone Cherry, but making rapid improvements in all areas. The signs look very good.

A decent crowd gathers for **Jack J Hutchinson**, and their slide guitar-laced *Boom Boom Brotherhood* stands out, though for a so-called power trio, it all seems just a wee bit too casual.

British Lion: received with genuine enthusiasm.

Russians **iamthemorning** are baroque pop prog with a very downbeat lyrical slant on life. "We write songs about death, suffering and pain," deadpans infectious vocalist Marjana Semkina. The result is moody and moving. At times reminiscent of Kate Bush, the band have a beautifully dark aptitude.

From the frailty of *Leaf And Stream* to *The King Will Come* and its stirring bravura, Wishbone Ash's *Argus* remains an enduring piece of music, and although the bassist's voice sometimes croaks in its upper register, **Martin Turner** and his band replicate it lovingly – save for dropping Monty Python's *The Lumberjack Song* into *Warrior*.

Having eased into their first beers of the day with **Snakecharmer** (a decent, if slightly beige melodic rock hybrid of ex-Wishbone Ash, Whitesnake and Thunder members), the main stage crowd is more than ready for **Blues Pills** and their Summer Of Love-via-2017 tones. It's amazing to see how far they've come since their nervous first UK gigs, with Elin Larsson commanding the crowd with soul-queen howls and beaming, hair-throwing charisma. All of a sudden they feel like a bigger band all round.

Big Boy Bloater & The Limits have a style that swings and an off-kilter sense of humour. The result is hugely entertaining, and the packed tent shows an appreciation for this bright and flowing 30-minute set.

Monster Truck already have an enviable reputation, and they build on it with an all-out assault here. It's reminiscent of Raging Slab mixed with Grand Funk, and the Canadians show they have a modern edge on skilfully elaborate songs like *She's A Witch* and *For The Sun*. Expect massive strides towards major status imminently.

Blues Pills: Elin Larsson commands the crowd with soul-queen howls and beaming charisma.

Devin Townsend: a true original.

While peers stumble, flag or fall, UFO continue to deliver.

Kenny Wayne Shepherd: sensational.

Ending with *Sylvia* and *Hocus Pocus*, veteran Dutch proggers **Focus** offer a bizarre yet appealing mix of skit-scat vocals, yodelling, jaunty flute solos and jazz-rock tempos, pounded out on a Hammond organ that looks like it's held together with duct tape. Wonderfully quaint.

Aaron Keylock still has a long way to go before he fulfils his obvious potential. The guitar work is already at a high level, but his vocals are barely decent, while the songwriting is a little naive. That may explain why there isn't a large crowd for his set.

Nashville scamps **Tyler Bryant & The Shakedown** are steeped in blues rock, but there's a mischievous, almost punk streak in their frontman. No wonder they were picked to open for Guns N' Roses. And today's Blues Stage set is a proper team effort, right from the deliciously harmonised oomph of *Weak & Weeping* through to the blues-with-balls likes of Muddy Waters cover *Got My Mojo Workin'*. Super.

If anything at RMF rams home the fact that we are seeing many of our favourite bands in their last days, it's **Magnum**. Watching Bob Catley trying to sing is painful. He wants it so badly, and you will him to do so, but he just can't. They still make wonderful records but perhaps the time has come to retire from the road or they'll tarnish their legacy.

Almost unknown in the UK so far, **Supersonic Blues Machine** are a revelation. They mix mid-70s southern rock with funk and soul in a brew that catches the attention. And guitarist Eric Gales adds extra zest during a brief guest appearance. The highlight is a spectacular cover of the evergreen *Ain't No Love In The Heart Of The City*. Momentous.

Ever reliable for a good knees-up, **The Quireboys** are the musical equivalent of your mate who persuades you to stay out for "just one more". Arriving today with a set of Quireboys-ified blues classics (which will be released as part of new album *White Trash Blues*), Spike and co. offer the heartiest, booziest takes on the likes of John Lee Hooker we've heard in ages. Much fun is had by all.

While peers stumble, flag or fall, **UFO** continue to deliver. Those ultra-conservative set-lists are still an issue, but Phil Mogg retains an unmistakable voice, baiting an unspecified friend performing on another stage – Spike from The Quireboys, presumably – for the fact that his own band attracts "more women". The one-liners are just as important as *Doctor Doctor* and *Rock Bottom*.

As the sun sets on the Prog stage, **Devin Townsend** (brought in to replace original headliners Kansas) marks a shift from the flutes and fiddly time signatures one may have expected. The crowd is small and tentative at first, but grows into a delighted mass as Townsend and co. thrash out the soaring, new-age-meets-angry-metal likes of *Rejoice*, *Stormbending* and *Supercrush*. "How many people here are over forty? I bet there's lots of us!" he booms, in one of many self-aware, stand-up comedy blasts of banter. A true original, and the only performer to combine penis jokes with melancholy gems like *Deadhead*.

The Blues Stage tent is packed and there are hundreds outside trying to peer in as **Joanne Shaw Taylor** strides into action. She's not phased at all by such attention – Taylor is now a consummate performer, not only a more than capable guitarist, but also a growing vocalist. The band lock into her musical needs, making this a tight and punchy set.

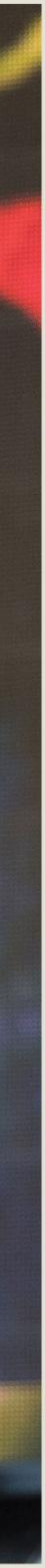
ZZ Top's experience headlining festivals is obvious as they stride smoothly into *Got Me Under Pressure*, followed swiftly by *Waitin' For The Bus*, *Jesus Just Left Chicago* and *Gimme All Your Lovin'*. It's an opening salvo that sets the tone for a performance that glides through the trio's vast catalogue. They mix their own masterpieces – from *Cheap Sunglasses* to *Sharp Dressed Man* and *Legs* – with covers including *Foxey Lady* and *Sixteen Tons*, and the retro first encore of *La Grange* and *Tush* is followed by a return for *Jailhouse Rock*. It's all supremely timed by a supreme trio.

Words: **Dave Ling**, **Malcolm Dome** and **Polly Glass**
Photos: **Kevin Nixon**

Tom Petty: while his feet are in Los Angeles, his heart and soul remain in the Deep South.

'*Free Fallin'* is simply a marvellous pop epic with a mystic bite.'

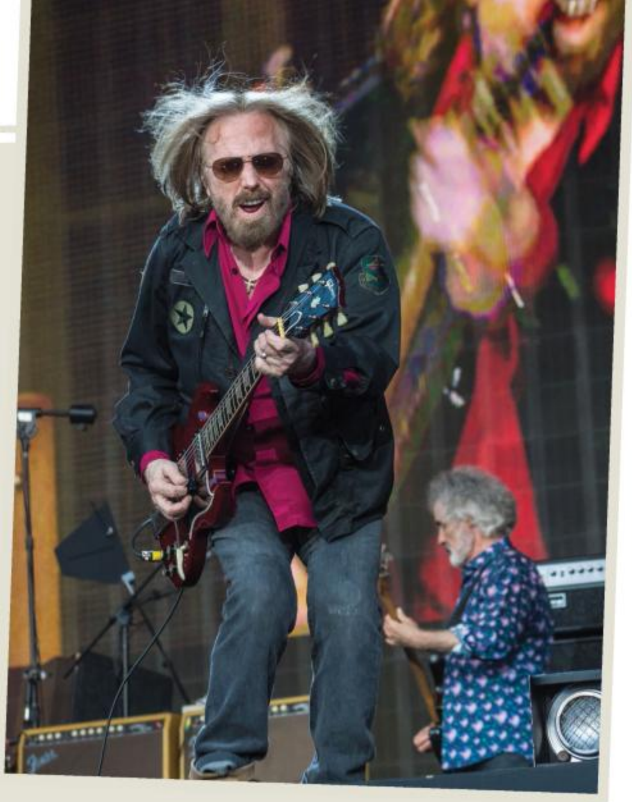
Stevie Nicks: throwing Mata Hari shapes.



Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers / Stevie Nicks

London Hyde Park

For two veterans with oodles of classic songs between them, both dripping professionalism, this show should be a walk in the Park.



★ July 9. A full moon in Capricorn, aka the Buck Moon: a time for rutting, magic and midsummer madness. Or, as they call it in Hyde Park, Barclaycard Presents British Summer Time. A suitable venue, then, for the return of the Mac queen Stevie Nicks, who takes to the Great Oak Stage in Mafioso widow's weeds, throwing Mata Hari shapes. Her well-crafted band – led by veteran guitarist Waddy Wachtel, Nicks's long-time confidante and accomplice – lock in on opener *Gold And Braid*. It's just one of four songs from her 1981 *Bella Donna* debut album era that will punctuate a late afternoon made for languid nostalgia.

As fresh shawls arrive, Stevie's gloved hands reach skywards during *If Anyone Falls*. Her voice is cool and brittle these days (don't ask, but she's 69), yet she's still got the moves, and her singers – Sharon Celani and Marilyn 'Minnie' Martin (regular Lori Nicks being on maternity leave) – don't have to perform any rescue missions should the show drift south. It doesn't. *Gypsy*, from Fleetwood Mac's *Mirage*, increases the pulse in its newly minted arrangement (from the Netflix drama of the same name starring Naomi Watts), while *Outside The Rain* keeps her fans on the edge of ecstasy, before *Dreams* gets even hardened cynics mumbling the *Rumours* anthem.

Things get whacky only when Nicks emerges in a White Witch of Narnia fur coat for *Moonlight (A Vampire's Dream)*, then returns to her gothic dressing-up box for the silk *Gold Dust Woman* shawl. Her paeans to Prince are highlights – *Stand Back*, written in response to *Little Red Corvette*, bears his imprint, and tonight she references *When Doves Cry* on *Edge Of Seventeen*. Nicks's own history is personified in *Rhiannon*, sounding gorgeous as ever. "The only song that we've ever not done… you just can't get rid of her."

With *Landslide*, which is of similar vintage, fading away, Stevie makes a gracious exit, promising great things from the headliners. She's not a bad warm-up act and she'll be back later.

Full moon fever part two. As their intro song, Johnny Cash's *Country Boy*, fades away, Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers hit a British stage for the first time since 2012 when they sold out London's Royal Albert Hall and appeared at the Isle of Wight festival. "It's been far too long, a ridiculously long time," says Petty, who takes to the stage sporting his familiar military jacket as a reminder that while his feet are in Los Angeles, his heart and soul – and that of the Heartbreakers – remains in the Deep South, and in Gainesville, Florida precisely.

But he has a long-term soft spot for the UK since he established the group as a major force following a 1977 support tour here with Nils Lofgren. As a reminder, they turn back the clock with video footage of the band performing on *The Old Grey Whistle Test* and kick off with *Rockin' Around (With You)*, the first track on their 1976 debut album. "To be here in such a beautiful London summer is amazing," he announces. "We are celebrating our fortieth year together, so we're gonna look at this show like a giant record and we're gonna drop the needle all over it!"

It's partly due to Petty and the band's professionalism that tonight's set-list feels tailor-made, although actually, bar the odd tweak, it's written in stone. What has changed over the years is that the Heartbreakers are more muscular than in their skinny power-pop days. Petty plays far more lead guitar, and the set pieces, such as *It's Good To Be King*, have mutated into Allman Brothers territory, with Mike Campbell adding the southern accents to a tune that started life as a piece of whimsy but is now about as badass as anything in the Heartbreakers catalogue, with thrilling interplay between Fender Telecaster and Gibson SG.

In fact, every song is delivered with a brace of different guitars – great news for equipment nerds. Still, there are subtleties with *Crawling Back To You* and the semi-acoustic *Wildflowers*, and plenty of those backs-against-the-wall protest pieces that have united Petty and his followers across the years. *You Don't Know How It Feels* and the anthemic singalong *I Won't Back Down* still have plenty of heft, and *Free Fallin'*, with its drawled echoes of LSD-country Byrds, is simply a marvellous pop epic with a mystic bite and enough personal detail to fuel a short story.

Walks, from the *She's The One* soundtrack, seems like an odd choice. They'd have been better off maintaining the mood with the hook-fest of, say, *Into The Great Wide Open*, but the sense of communion demanded from these events returns on *Don't Come Around Here No More*, the song inspired by the fractious end of Stevie Nicks's relationship with Joe Walsh, a couple on the highway to hell.

Then guess what? Nicks is brought on stage as "an honorary band member" to duet on *Stop Draggin' My Heart Around*. It's not quite the surprise some thought, but a pleasant Everly Brothers moment given extra oomph by Petty's immaculate singers, the Webb Sisters.

The home straight is a doddle thanks to the ethereal *Learning To Fly*, *Runnin' Down A Dream* and *Refugee*, although that now sounds vaguely cross rather than like any rebel yell. It's difficult to get too antsy at an event where subliminal messages for a well-known bank are being flashed in your face. This is corporate rock, like it or lump it, and if you really want to get close to the front then you have to pay a hefty upgrade.

Petty and company exit where they came in, with *American Girl*, slightly at odds with the rest of the set but an FM classic and a trusty old friend. Petty, Benmont Tench, Ron Blair, Campbell and friends take their bows, and the crowd flood out into the twilight, basking in the afterglow of having seen a preservation act give it their best shot. Maybe these days that's all you can ask for.

Words: **Max Bell**
Photos: **Kevin Nixon**

Petty and Mike Campbell lock into a groove.

U2

Berlin Olympic Stadium

A slick set of undisputed anthems.

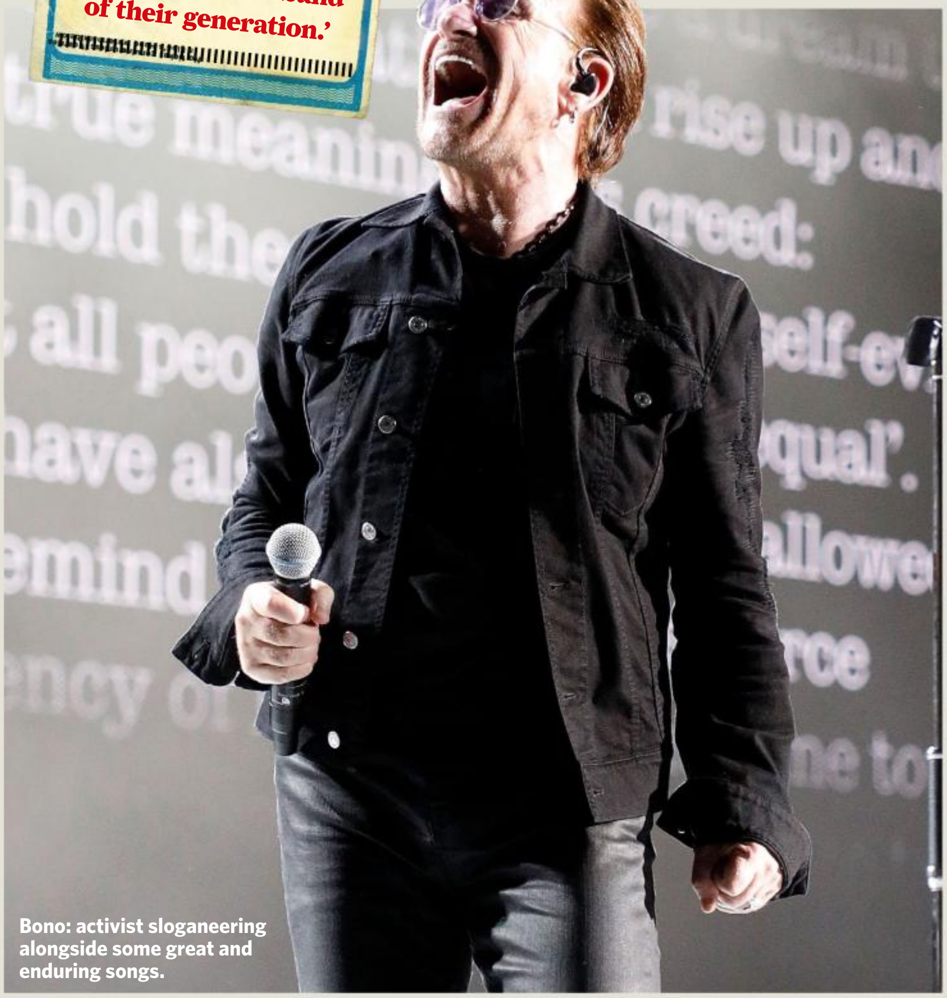
> 'U2 are the greatest grand-spectacle band of their generation.'

★ Playing their 1987 blockbuster best-seller *The Joshua Tree* in full for the first time ever, U2 insist this latest mega-tour is not a nostalgic indulgence but a re-examination of the album's America-themed anthems in a Trump-era context. Such spurious distinctions are arguable, but the enduring power of these songs is not. *Where The Streets Have No Name, I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For, With Or Without You* and more sound thrillingly crisp, percussive, radiant and vital, even in a rain-soaked Berlin stadium.

By the high-tech blockbuster standards of U2's recent tours, this production is strikingly agile and lean. Blazing from a huge high-resolution screen, Anton Corbijn's newly shot footage of majestic desert vistas and close-ups of human faces is simple yet powerful. Many of the songs are similarly refreshed. Making its belated live debut, *Red Hill Mining Town* has agreeable shades of early Bowie in its soaring new brass-band arrangement. Indeed Bono peppers this show with lyrical tributes to Bowie, including the German-language version of *"Heroes"*.

The post-album encore section drags a little, despite the stadium-sized mosh-pit hysteria triggered by adrenalised riff-monsters like *Elevation* and *Vertigo*. And while this writer has a higher tolerance than most for Bono's activist sloganeering, his windy statements about feminism and inequality feel fuzzy and trite in Berlin. But, love them or loathe them, this show confirms U2's position as the greatest grand-spectacle band of their generation.

Stephen Dalton



Bono: activist sloganeering alongside some great and enduring songs.

Lee Aaron

London Camden Underworld

Triumphant return to rock.

★ Last year, having diversified via jazz and opera, Lee Aaron returned to rock music after two decades away from it, releasing her *Fire And Gasoline* album and playing a well-received spot at the Rockingham Festival. Tonight, Canada's self-styled metal queen (the recipient of three Toronto Music Awards for Best Female Vocalist, and 10 Juno nominations), is back in London for the first time since the 1980s, belting out a set of vintage tunes, material from *Gasoline* and, perhaps unexpectedly, previewing a follow-up that's due in the autumn.

I'm A Woman fits her description of said album being "a little bit blues rock", and she's daring enough to have taken a stab at Deep Purple's *Burn*, one of two covers (the other being *Rock Candy* by Montrose). Purple's 1974 warhorse is, of course, a virtually untouchable song, but Aaron and her band revisit it with all necessary respect and class. Along with golden oldie *Barely Holding On*, it's the perfect platform for her to really show off her vocal strengths.

Even at 54, Aaron still has the voice and that same lovably goofy charisma. She also looks great and appears totally comfortable to be back doing what she did so well all those years ago.

If there's a marked absence of really vintage numbers, it's forgotten as Aaron departs to huge roars after her signature anthem *Metal Queen*, and an encore of *Hot To Be Rocked* seals the night in fine style.

Dave Ling

Prong

London Camden Underworld

Full-on relentless joy.

★ Tommy Victor is a whirling, hirsute mass of mania, riffs and sweat. In that respect nothing changes with Prong. The US trio, who have been guided by Victor since their formation in 1986, never stop. While other bands of similar vintage might blow out the fumes for a few songs then take a welcome breather, that's not the Prong way and it's certainly not the case tonight.

From the opening crescendo of *Disbelief*, *Ultimate Authority* and *Beg To Differ*, Prong are simply mesmerising. Victor marks out his territory with some vehement guitar playing, complemented by raging vocals. Not only does it get everyone's attention, it also has the whole audience moving and shaking. Fans and musicians are of one accord, powered by the metal overload of the music.

The anthems keep on coming. From *Cut-Rate* to *Another Worldly Device*, the band – with Mike Longhurst on bass and Art Cruz behind the drum kit – ravage their back catalogue with all the sensitivity of a horde of crazed cannibals let loose in a nursery. It could all could have peaked too early with their classic *Snap Your Fingers, Snap Your Neck* (from 1994's *Cleansing*) which surprisingly is delivered several songs before the end of the set, but such is Prong's confidence in themselves and the audience that they use their most famous song as a springboard to reach even greater heights. Manic nirvana!

Malcolm Dome

The Shelters

London Soho Borderline

Tom Petty-approved rockers play their debut British headline gig.

★ Three days ago The Shelters played their very first UK show, in front of tens of thousands of people in the sun at London's Hyde Park. They were opening up for Tom Petty, the LA band's mentor and co-producer of their self-tiltled debut album. As far as intros go, that's hell of a gig to grab.

The Borderline wouldn't even hold the queue for the Hyde Park toilets, but The Shelters still attack it like it's the biggest thing they'll ever do. There's a fearlessness to them that's missing in so many other new bands these days. It might be a Californian thing. Or it might just be the confidence that comes with having an A-list Amercian icon in your corner.

None of that would matter much if they didn't have the songs, but they do. *Rebel Heart* and *Gold* sit in the Goldilocks zone between psychedelically inclinced 60s beat-pop and colourful 70s power-pop that's at odds with the newly refurbished venue's all-black paint scheme. There's an unavoidable whiff of Petty's no-frills heartland rock to it all too.

Co-frontmen Josh Jove and Chase Simpson are an unlikely pair: the quiffed Jove is James Dean to Simpson's slacker Shaggy from *Scooby Doo*. Together they lift pages from *How To Be A Guitar Hero* playbook, peeling off the kind of solos you thought had been made illegal years ago. Only time will tell if The Shelters are 40 years behind the curve or way ahead of it.

Dave Everley

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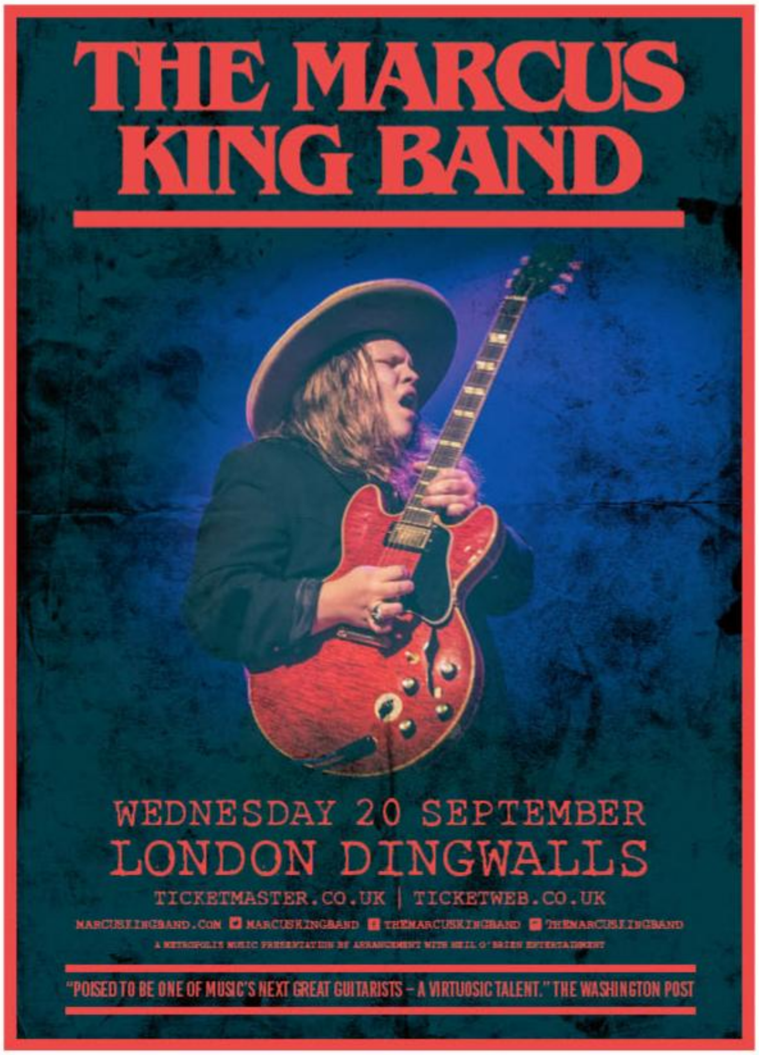
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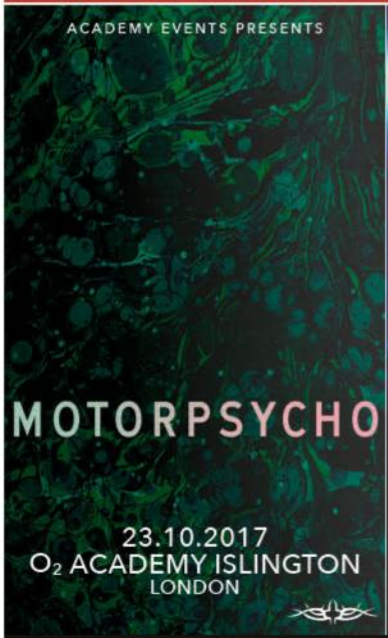

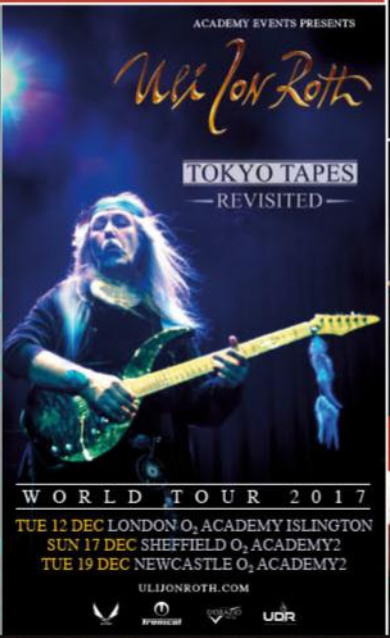

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Heavy Load

Heavy questions for heavy rockers

Former Girl and L.A. Guns singer **Philip Lewis** on not being posh, not holding a grudge and dating a Bond girl.

Interview: **Dave Ling**

Philip Lewis was playing a rock star called Snake Hips in a Rotterdam fringe theatre group when he met future Girl bandmate Gerry Laffy and decided to pursue the same role in real life. After spells with the New Torpedoes and Bernie Tormé's Electric Gypsies, in 1987 singer Lewis relocated to America to join L.A. Guns. Now, after 14 years of acrimony, Lewis and Guns guitarist Tracii Guns are reunited on a new L.A. Guns album, aptly titled *The Missing Peace*.

You later said: "When I joined L.A. Guns they so badly wanted to be Girl."
Tracii, Izzy Stradlin and all of the Guns N' Roses guys were big aficionados, which spoke volumes as those albums were import only in the States.

What's the biggest misconception about you?
Some people assume I'm posh. But I don't come from money. I'm a self-made man and my life has been a great adventure.

Whereabouts in London were you born?
Queen Charlotte's Hospital in Hammersmith. I had quite a Dickensian childhood. My mum died when I was young and I was raised by a wicked stepfather, who was sometimes away on Her Majesty's Pleasure.

How did being privately educated affect how you became?
I was in boarding school from seven to sixteen. It was pretty isolating. Leaving school was pretty much the beginning of my life.

Could you have pursued an acting career?
The theatre group did ask me to stay on, but by that point music meant too much.

Girl were signed to Jet Records by the notorious Don Arden.
Yeah. At first, although we looked good, we were not a great band, but people were talking about us because I was spending time with [actress and future Bond girl] Britt Ekland. So Don gave us the 'rich and famous' contract: if you get famous, I get rich.

During an early club tour, Girl travelled in a white Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud belonging to Ekland. Did you use arrogance as a marketing tool?
Turning up at smelly pubs in a Roller? Of course we did. But the arrogance was a big show. We didn't think we were that good. In fact, with the exception of Phil Collen [who went on to join Def Leppard], we were fucking terrible. The whole thing was a huge bluff.

How did you feel when Girl finally broke up, in 1982?
I was relieved. Girl was a poem, not an eight-part novel.

After trying again with the New Torpedoes and Bernie Tormé, you moved to the States to find stardom. Did that leave a sour taste?
Yeah. It was irresponsible of the British labels to not take a chance on [Tormé's band] the Electric Gypsies. That was chickenshit of them. I had learned so much from Bernie but he was ready to fire me. He'd already spoken to [Quireboys singer] Spike about replacing me when I got the call from Tracii Guns.

"Don gave us the 'rich and famous' contract: if you get famous, I get rich."

When L.A. Guns' second album, *Cocked And Loaded*, sold half a million copies how did it change you?
Coming back to England with a gold record under my belt was a little bit of a 'fuck you'.

Do you consider yourself to be English or American?
Great question. As of my last birthday [his 60th] I've spent more time in the States. I got a Yank passport in 2003 but I'm not interested in dual citizenship. Visiting [the UK] is lovely but I'm not coming back.

What can Philip Lewis do that nobody else can?
Get away with murder.

What's the best advice you've been given?
To get a vasectomy. Being in a band, you need the snip. Having a kid that you don't want can fuck up a career.

After more than a decade you're working with Tracii again. Are you really reformed characters?
Yeah. Both of us are parents, and that changes people. We had a bad falling out, but it was so long ago that I'd forgotten what the problem was. Why hold a grudge for that long? We're still the same brats, but the feud was stupid.

Which actor would you like to portray you in a film of your life?
[Instantly] Sean Connery. Or maybe a young Gary Oldman.

Do you believe in God?
I think there's an afterlife. I've led a charmed life, because I understand the importance of charm. Ultimately one makes one's own heaven or hell – you can choose.

What will be written on your tombstone?
I always used to say I would have 'Loud, confident and wrong'. But now it would be 'Loud, confident and right'.

The Missing Peace is released on October 13 via Frontiers Records.

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